

A P L A I N  
M E T H O D  
O F  
Christian Devotion:  
Laid down in  
*Discourses, Meditations,*  
A N D  
P R A Y E R S,  
Fitted to the Various OCCASIONS of a  
R E L I G I O U S L I F E.

Translated and Revised from the *French* of  
Monsieur JURIEU. (2)

By WILLIAM FLEETWOOD, D. D.  
*Late Lord Bishop of Ely.*

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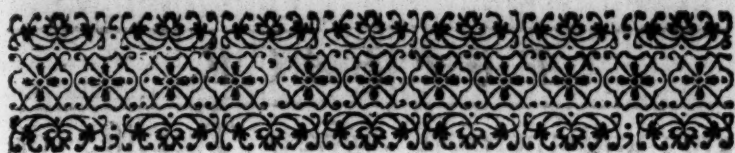




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TO THE  
READER.



**I**T cannot (God be thanked) be said, that there is any need of multiplying Books of this Nature, because we have such Plenty of them ready to our Hands: But certainly, there may be (and, I question not, is) made great Use, both of their *Number* and *Diversity*; for 'tis almost the same with the Food of the *Soul*, as it is with that of the *Body*: The end of all Mens eating, is indeed the same, namely, the Preservation of their Life and Health; but neither are their Stomachs or Digestions equal and alike, and therefore they consult their several Appetites. To be devoutly minded, is (or should be) the End and Aim of all Men, but the Ways to come to it are just as many, and as different, as the Tempers, Humours, Inclinations and Constitutions of Men

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are; and therefore *different* Treatises of, and Helps to Devotion, will be always *useful*, if not absolutely *necessary*. There is a *Milk* for Infants in *Religion*, as well as in *Tears*, and there is stronger Meat for stronger Stomachs.

I am as well persuaded, as I can be in a Matter of this Nature, that nothing ever was composed more suitable to the Tempers and Affections of Mankind in general, that more consulteth the Desires and Needs of human Nature, or is better fitted to promote an *equal, regular, and reasonable* Devotion, than our *Book of Common Prayer*: And yet this has not hindred many excellent and extraordinary Persons of our Church, both *dead* and *living*, from composing other lesser *Manuals* or larger Treatises, both for their own, and for the publick Use and Service: And all of them have had their several Followers and Admirers; and all of them have had their blessed Fruits; which may not only serve for an *Excuse* for *putting out*, but also for an *Encouragement* to the *reading* of this *Treatise of Devotion*.

The Fame and Reputation of its *Author*, with the multitude of its *Editions*, may recommend the purchasing this Book to them that otherwise know it not; but  
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the good Spirit it is written withal, has made it dear and valuable to them that do; and the good Grace of God, I hope, will make it serviceable to all that meet with it. It is to no great purpose to account to the Publick, for the Translation and setting forth this Book at this Season; no Reasons will be good enough, if it do not answer the Ends of a Book of Devotion; and if it do, there will be need of none. 'Tis easier for me to believe it will be acceptable to all good People; and upon presumption of some Merit, to be bold to ask the Reader these few Favours, for letting him have this Book in *English*.

*First*, That neither this, nor any other *Treatise of Devotion*, hinder his frequenting of the *publick Prayers* and *Service* of the *Church*. There is a most peculiar *Grace* and *Comeliness* in those *Assemblings*, which, by *absenting*, is *deform'd*. And who would chuse to spoil that *Beauty of Holiness*, that conspires so sweetly to the raising up the Soul to God, and forwarding Devotion? And who would lose the merit of Obedience, where the *Commands* of our *Superiors* in the Church are so reasonable, the *Performances* so easy, and the *Fruits* so profitable? And lastly, who can tell the uncommon force of those collected and united



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united Prayers; or, for a little Matter, would deprive himself of the Benefit of that Conjunction?

*Secondly*, That he would use great Moderation, Prudence and Discretion, in his *Judgments* concerning Devotion; that he would not be vainly puffed up in his Imaginations, and think himself *truly devout*, when he sometimes feels within himself those *Ardors*, *Transports* and *Elevations* of Soul he may meet withal, in *this*, or any other *Treatise of Devotion*; unless he also find himself thereby influenc'd in a *steady, close, and constant* Practice of the Duties, both of *natural* and *reveal'd* Religion. For otherwise, he may chance unhappily to acquiesce in the meer *Mechanism* of Nature, or the light Effects of some poor, short-liv'd accidental Cause; and mistake the impetuous Heats of Fancy, and a strong Imagination, for the benign and gentle Warmths of true Devotion, that constantly excite Men to some good Performances.

*Thirdly*, That if he find himself already in Possession (as it were) of a *constant, regular* and *serious* Practice of his Duty in every other Particular, he would not be too much dejected and disconsolate, if he do not *frequently* feel those Ardences and Elevations of Soul he may sometimes have had

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had himself, have often heard of from others, and always found in *Manuals of Devotion*. Let him thank God for, and be contented with (for the present) that happy State whereunto he has attained, and not lie down in Sorrow and Despair, for what he has not reach'd. The Operations of *Grace* upon the *Soul* are no more the same in all Men, than those of *Nature* are upon the *Body*. The good Spirit of God blows (like the Wind) both *where* and *how* it lifts; always in *Mercy* where it does blow, but not in *Judgment* always where it bloweth not, or is absent, as to its extraordinary Influences. The Extasies of Devotion are most unquestionably sweet and ravishing to them that feel them; but are certainly no farther useful than they contribute to the bettering and amending of our Lives, and to the improvement of some Grace and Vertue; and a constant tenour of good Practice, is a more secure and more desirable State, than any unequal visionary one, and being caught sometimes into the third Heavens. Yet,

*Fourthly*, That he would not lazily rest himself in the dry, jejune Performance of the practick part of his Duty, without aspiring towards Heaven, and raising up his Soul to God, by frequent Contemplation.

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## P R E F A C E.

I did not intend to acquit him (in the foregoing Article) from endeavouring this with all his might, by all the reasonable and usual Methods of attaining it: But, that he should not be overwhelm'd with Grief or sad Solitude, if, after having done his best, he find his Heart more cold and unaffected in Devotion, than he look'd for, or desired.

*Fifthly*, That he would not rashly judge or measure *other Mens* Devotion by *his own*; or superciliously condemn and scorn the Ways and Methods other Men pursue the same *End* by, because they fall not in exactly with *his* private one. It is great odds, but many Things within this Book, will appear too fine and spiritual to one; to another inconceivable; and hardly practicable to a third; but there are others to whom they will seem neither.

*Lastly*, That he would daily put up this good Prayer to God; *That the Course of this World may be so peaceably ordered by his Governance, that his Church may joyfully serve him in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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W. Fleetwood.

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## Imprimatur.

Carolus Alston, R.P.D.  
Hen. Episc. Lond.  
à Sacris.

April 22.  
1692.

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A PLAIN  
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*Christian Devotion.*

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PART I.

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CHAP. I.

*What Devotion is.*



DEVOTION is not a Subject to be defin'd, according to Rules; it belongs more properly to the Closet than the Schools; and pious Souls, though ignorant, will instruct us better in the matter, than the most learned ones, that have no Conscience. But however, the Schools that concern themselves with every thing, have undertaken to define Devotion, as well as all the rest: Some of them,  
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by, a tender Mollification of the heart, and a mind that is mov'd: Others, by, that inward Consolation that the faithful feel in their exercises of piety: Others say it is, that Joy and readiness of heart, with which the Saints are carried to the Service of God. Some make it to consist, in Pleasures inconceivable and full of glory, that fill the Saints, and make them say, *My soul is satisfied, as it were with marrow and fatness*: And others in Desires and Longings. Upon all this I say, it may, perhaps be rashness to attempt to define what we cannot well express; for this is of the number of those things that cannot well be conceived, but by those that feel it, or if conceived, yet cannot be sufficiently set forth: At least it cannot be defin'd by any one word, or any single movement of the Soul; for 'tis it self a Compound of the several Kinds of Movements, and is made up of very different Sentiments or Senses: It has its Desires and its Distrusts, Hopes and Fears, Love and Hatred, Joy and Sorrow, Ardor, Zeal, Alacrity and Transports. It has Desires; for every Soul truly devout, does earnestly desire to be at peace, and one with God. *When shall I enter there (says she) and appear before the presence of God? As the Heart desireth the Water Brooks, so longeth my Soul after thee, O God.* It has its Distrusts; for a good Soul is in perpetual fear of being unworthy to possess those Graces it desires so earnestly; she cries, with the Centurion, to our Lord, *I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my roof*; and if she is in possession

of

of her God, she is afraid of losing him, and watches even whilst she sleeps, lest any thing should take from her, her well-beloved. There is also Fear in the Composition of this Virtue; for when a Soul is fallen into any grievous Sin, the Presence of God amazes her, and she is terrified at his great Majesty; and even in Innocence, a Soul truly devout, never presents it self before its God, without remembering, that the Angels tremble in his Presence, and saying, *Oh how dreadful is this place, surely the Lord is in it!* Love also has its share, and one may almost say, Love is the Source and Spring of all Devotion; in considering both the Beauty and the Goodness of God, the Soul is moved with a violent Desire and Longing after Union with him, and cries out with the Spouse, *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is pleasanter than wine.* Hatred also will come in; for a faithful Soul cannot love God, without renouncing the love of it self, and hating the World, whose Love is incompatible with that of God. Joy also is a great Ingredient in this Composition; and therefore the wise Man saith, *The heart of the just is a continual feast; Thou hast put more joy into my heart, says David, than the wicked have in their abundance. My heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad, therefore my soul shall rest in peace.* But yet we must own, this Light is not altogether pure and unmix'd, Devotion has its Sadnesses amidst its Joys, and oft-times sighs at the remembrance of its Infirmities and Failings. Lastly,

a very lively Readiness and Ardor enters in and seems to be the Body of Devotion, and is that which appears most in a faithful Soul. She has inconceivable Pleasure and Transports also in her Exercises of Piety, she hears the Word, she prays, she reads, she meditates and communicates, just as she does the Things of the World she most delights in. She flies to these Performances with abundance of Joy, and performs them with abundance of Ease. These are, I think, the Movements that make up Devotion; but we must needs remember that they are not always in the same Degree, even in the same Persons. Some of these Sentiments are always uppermost; at one time Joy prevails, and at another Sorrow; sometimes great Transports, and at others, Longings. And hence it comes, if you consult the Saints about the Nature of Devotion, that they will give you very different Answers; for all will tell you what they feel themselves, and each of them perhaps has differing Sentiments. And sometimes too, it happens that one and the same Soul finds her Devotion different at several times, each of the foresaid Movements reigning in its turn; to Day a Christian shall be full of Hopes of some great Good in Prospect; to morrow full of Joy for the Possession of it: To Day, reigns Sadness for his Sins, and at another time Desires and Longings: And all these Changes happen according to the several States and Conditions in which the Soul finds it self, and according to the different prospects

spects Meditation furnishes it withal; considering God sometimes, with respect to his Love and Mercy, sometimes with respect to his Severity and Justice: Sometimes also he will look on his Conscience on that side where 'tis strongest fortified, and sometimes where 'tis weakest, and this will cause a Change in the Movements of his Devotion: Lightness and Joy it self, which seems to be the very Soul of Devotion, is not always inseparable from it; for sometimes the best of Souls find themselves clog'd, and dull, and very sad, but when the heavy Fit is over, and lightness returns again, they find themselves sorely aggrieved for having wanted it at all.

## M E D I T A T I O N.

*Alas, my Soul, how ignorant art thou of heavenly things! The natural Man receives not the Things that be of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14. for they are foolishness to him.*

*These are those deep Abysses that thou canst not sound: Thy light is but as darkness. But 'tis not yet so strange thou shouldst not understand those heavenly things that God hath reserved to himself, and hath as it were enclosed in his own bosom, since thou art ignorant of what God does in thee thy self, and dost not know the heavenly things that are in thine own heart. Vain and haughty as thou art, and proud of those advantages that Nature bestowed on thee above all other Creatures visible! Thou sayst thou art an Angel incarnate, say rather that thou*



*art an Angel imprisoned in a sad and dark abode, that knowest but in part, and seest but in part, obscurely, and as in a glass, and through a veil darkned with flesh and blood.*

### P R A Y E R.

O my God, Father of lights, from whom comes every good and perfect gift, Open mine eyes that I may see the wonders of thy Law; I am a Stranger and a Sojourner on earth, Oh hide not thy Commandments from me: I am in quest of what devotion is, but cannot possibly discover it, without thy aid; I shall in vain seek for it in another's works, if I do not find it in my own heart: it is a depth and who can fathom it? I find not what I seek for, there, and where then shall I find it? Oh I will find it then in thee my God, who art indeed the source of what I seek for. Fill then my heart with flames of zeal and piety, that so my soul may have no need of studying any thing besides it self, to know what true devotion is; and when 'tis known, that it may love it infinitely it self, and make it be beloved of others also. Oh let it shine in all my actions, and in all my words, like a bright lamp, to lighten all my Neighbours, and enkindle in their hearts the holy flames of pure devotion! Amen.

C H A P.

## C H A P. II.

*Of the Effects of Devotion.*

**I**N speaking of the nature of Devotion in the foregoing Chapter, we have insinuated all its Effects ; but it may not be unprofitable to enlarge ourselves a little further hereupon ; these Effects well understood will lead us to the knowledge of their Cause, and will serve as a touch-stone, as it were, for the good Souls to try thereby the purity and progress of their Devotion. The first of these Effects, is a vehement desire of conversing with God, and pouring out its Sorrows and Concerns into his Bosom ; of hearing his Word, and receiving the Gages of his Love in his most holy Sacraments. You see these movements in *David* when he sighed after God's House, and thought nothing more insupportable in all his exile, than his being remov'd from the Courts of the Lord's house : He is jealous even of the Swallows blest Condition, that find themselves a Nest therein : he would be Porter to that House, and be content never to leave it. My Soul, says he, longeth after thy Courts ; One thing have I desir'd of God, which I will require, even that I may dwell in the house of God all the days of my life : he owns, that the Hopes of meeting with God again within his House, supported him from falling into Despair, I should utterly

*have fainted, if I had not verily believed to have seen the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.* A faithful Soul hath no less passionate desires to be in private with her God, than David had to be with him in publick in his Temple: she looks upon all time as lost that she is oblig'd to give unto the World, and when she can break loose from its affairs, she runs into God's Bosom, as the dry Hart unto the Water-brooks; as the sad Miser to the search of Gain, or as the Courtier, at the Hour and Place, to see his Prince, and to be seen, and to receive of him considerable Favours.

The second Effect, is a Joy that we may call inconceivable: the Faithful in his Devotions feels his heart enlarged; the Holy Ghost dwells there with all the riches of his Grace, and all the treasures of his Consolations. He that shall ask this Soul, why she is so content, it may be shall receive no answer from her; but the true cause of it is this, that God has spread abroad in her his sweet and saving Influences, that are accompanied continually with full Felicity. The Pleasure that the Miser finds in counting up his Riches, the Ambitious tastes in hoping for new Honours, or the Voluptuous finds in his Excesses and Debauches, are dull insipid Pleasures in comparison of those a Soul truly devout finds in her communicating with God. It is a Sea where all the Troubles and Afflictions of the Flesh are overwhelmed; the Persecuted find their Refuge there, the Poor their Wealth, the Sick their

their Health, the Despis'd their Glory, the Humble ones their Exaltation ; in a word, the most Miserable find a general forgetfulness of all their Miseries : 'tis there a Soul disgusted with the World, meets with that true repose that makes him look without envy, and even with pity, on the cruel agitations of those Worldlings that are fastened to *Ixion's* Wheels, and *Sisyphus's* Stones ; that is, those restless Labours that return perpetually, and never know an end.

And hence proceeds a third Effect of Devotion, and that is, a forgetfulness of the World : when the Faithful shuts his Closet-door, we may say he shuts his door to all the World ; and says within himself, get ye behind me worldly Thoughts, Objects of Vanity withdraw, and come not near me in this place : let me enjoy in peace this place of Refuge, and let me here entirely give myself to God : The faithful dies on this sort every Day, for Death itself not more defaces worldly Images, than does Devotion, when it withdraws a Christian Soul out of the Commerce of the World. This Soul can truly say, *The World is crucified to me, and I to it, it is not I that live, but Jesus Christ my Lord that liveth in me ; and the life that I live, is in the faith of the Son of God, that hath loved me, and given himself a ransom for me.* We need not wonder if the World gives place that very moment, for I suppose 'twill find but little entertainment in a Soul prepar'd as I have been describing. God  
will



will take up this heart, of which he hitherto possessed but a share, for a heart truly devout, plunges itself (if we may speak so) wholly into God, and God for his part wholly enters into it. If, in this state, he casts his Eyes upon the World, he looks upon it as below, and with an air of contempt. Alas, says he, what are the Riches, Honours, and Advantages, that do so often end in everlasting death, to the Riches God affords me here within, nay to my God himself whom I possess with so much pleasure? these earthly Goods shall soon be lost, but I shall never lose this Sovereign good, that filleth me within; and Death that shall despoil the living of their Pomp, shall cloath me with new Honours, and fresh Glories.

A fourth Effect, is Sprightliness and lively Joy in running and advancing to the exercises of Piety. A General of an Army flies to the Battle, when he sees the Conquest certain; but the faithful One has other sort of wings, that make him fly whither Devotion calls him: he knows not what that Heaviness and Languor means, that keeps back those who are called to labour; he is not of the slothful's mind, that turns upon his Bed, as a door upon its hinges, and contends with sleep and laziness, with design to be overcome. The true Devout, is one of those Eagles, of which our Lord spoke, *where the Carcase is, thither also will the Eagles be gathered together.* He knows that he shall find his Saviour, dead hereto-

heretofore, but now alive, either within the Temple, or his Closet; thither he flies with the rapidity of an hungry Eagle, and nothing possibly can stop his course; Friends, Enemies, Employs, Business, Intreaties, Threatnings, Fears, Dangers, he will surmount all Obstacles, that set themselves to hinder him.

Another Effect, is a certain Exaltation of Soul, that I can find no other name for, than a kind of Extasy, by which the Soul is ravish'd, as it were, out of its self; it is so fixt on Contemplation of celestial Objects, that it not only has no farther intelligence with earthly Things, but it has also lost its Senses, has no more Ears, nor Eyes, and neither sees nor hears any longer. *St. Peter* whilst he prayed, saw the Heavens open'd, and a Sheet tied at four corners, let down to the Earth: *St. Paul* in prayer was ravish'd up to the third Heaven: and true Devout ones have even to this day their Extasies: they see the Heaven opened with *St. Stephen*, and they are carried thither with *St. Paul*, for they enter into secret Commerce and Intelligence with God: The Soul is so taken up herein, that she sees nothing of what passes without, and employing all her might in contemplating upon God, it is not strange if she has nothing left for other Objects. *Blessed are those* (saith great *St. Basil*) *that are wholly busied in contemplating this true Beauty; for being fastned there, by the bonds of Charity and Heavenly Love, they forget both their Relations and their Friends, their Houses and their Goods, and even*

*even the necessities of Meat and Drink.* And why should not this be done in matters of Devotion, as well as in every thing besides? When Men are very intent on Reading, clearing an Account, answering an Adversary, or the like, a thousand Objects pass before their Eyes, which they perceive not : a faithful Soul is so included and collected in itself, that 'tis not easily diverted by whatsoever passes : if it prays, it is wholly in Heaven ; if it hears, it is wholly fixt in suspence on the Tongue of the Speaker ; if it reads, its Heart is wholly where its Eyes are set ; if it meditates, it is wholly swallowed up in its Subjects ; and if the fluttering Birds, vain light Thoughts, come in to defile the Sacrifice, it does immediately, like *Abraham*, drive them away with Anger. Thus I explain, and thus conceive the Extasies of Devotion. If you will otherwise take that term, for those effectual Ravishments, that were the privileges of the Prophets, and the Saints of the first rank, I should hardly think there were Examples of that nature to be found ; I have not faith enough to believe what is said of those Devotions, that elevate not only Souls, but even Bodies from the Earth, and carry them up aloft.

The last effect of Devotion, of which I will speak, is a certain kind of Fire that warms and heats the Heart. One cannot well conceive this thing, that has not felt it, and I cannot otherwise give it you, than in the words of the Saints : *Did not our hearts burn within us whilst*

he

he talked with us, and opened the Scriptures? My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned, and at the last I spake with my tongue. They say the Devout Souls have oft been seen, with their Countenances as it were inflamed amidst their Devotions, which must needs proceed from the heat of their Hearts, that spreads and shews itself upon the Face. One may call this Fire, a fermentation of the Spirits of Piety, which oftentimes makes impressions, even in the Eyes: and hence, it may be, came that brightness of St. Stephen, of whom it is said, his Enemies saw his face, as it had been the face of an Angel, his flaming zeal spreading itself even to his Eyes, and making them appear sparkling, and full of Fire and Glory. These Flashes also are not without their Showers; this Fire, I mean, is ordinarily accompanied with Tears, the Heart is heated, swells and grows big, and breaks in tenderness, and then the Eyes flow with their Tears. St. Austin represents himself in one of these warm Fits, and says, *After strong Meditation had drawn out all my misery from the bottom where it was hid to represent it to the Eyes of my Heart, there was suddenly raised a mighty storm and tempest in me, which was followed by an excessive shower of tears.* These Tears proceed not always from sorrow for sin, but are sometimes caused by a struggling of Thoughts, and a confusion of good Motions, that throw the Soul into a kind of a disorder, which yet is sweeter, and much better than the greatest Calm.

M E D I-



## MEDITATION.

How were it to be wished, that Men were but as holy, as they are eloquent and understanding! They make fine Pictures, but where, alas, are their Originals? I see the Characters of true Devotion are exceeding beautiful and lovely: but, oh, the more I think hereon, the more I am confounded: when I consider what I ought to be, and then examine what I am, I think that I am either nothing, or only what I should not be: I find within me none of those impatient longings after God, and of conversing with him by holy Prayers, and holy Meditations. I long indeed, but 'tis not after God's House, nor yet for the retirement of my Closet. Ah weak and feeble are those kind of longings! I do violence to my heart in withdrawing it from the Arms of this World, to put it into God's hands. I go into my Closet to my Devotions, but 'tis rather to acquit myself of a duty laid upon me, than to gratify my Inclinations. Where is this joy that I should taste in acts of Piety? Where are the transports, extasies, and flames, and kindlings of that heavenly Fire, that I have been describing? All is dead within me, and if I think to leave the World when I begin to enter in my Closet, I find my self deceiv'd, for there it enters with me. I feel in exercising every faculty of my Soul a dreadful heaviness, that stops my flights, and throws me to the Earth again; all my endeavours upwards are but short and weak, and rise not half-way towards Heaven.

PRAY-

## P R A Y E R.

Have pity on my sad condition, O my Father and my God, draw me and I shall run after thee. Why should I tarry in the shades of death? Raise me and quicken me, thou Son of righteousness, that carriest healing in thy wings; let him that calls himself the rising Sun, visit me from on high in the bowels of his mercy: Let my heart burn, when I read thy Scriptures, and hear thy Word: Let my Prayers be earnest, and my piety sustained by the force and flames of thy strong love, and of thy grace. And thou my soul, wait not for grace, with arms across, but go before, and call and say, Come thou, Lord Jesus, come: Hast thee O God of my Salvation: Awake thou that sleepest, rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life. Chase hence this sloth, be rocked no more upon this bed of security: banish this coldness, and shake off this sluggish heaviness: take up the eagles wings, and fly to Heaven, into the bosom of thy Lord; where thou shalt find such sweets, as thou hast never tasted, never seen, or heard, and such as never entered thy Imagination.

C H A P.

## C H A P. III.

*That Devotion is very necessary.*

**N**O Man can doubt of the necessity of Devotion, that does but understand, or can express in any tolerable measure, what it is: Devotion is the Soul of the Soul, and life of Piety; 'tis that which gives the price and value to the exercises and divine worship of a good Soul: Preparations are necessary to every Thing. The Orator that is to speak in Publick gathers first his matter, and then essays to put it in good form: A Soldier that must fight, prepares his Arms and calls his courage up: and he that's going to a Nuptial Feast, puts on his best attire. Why then should we present ourselves to God by Prayer, by Reading, or by hearing of his Word, seeking his Aid, or rendering him our Thanks, without the holy and preparatory dispositions of true Piety, that are of so great value in his sight? We always do that well, which we do heartily; and nothing can be done to any purpose, unless we make ourselves Parties concern'd; the Soldier that carries not his heart along with him to fight, will turn his back before the Battle ends: and the Orator whose mind is not touch'd with what he says himself, will never move another. If therefore works of the Tongue and Hand, will signify so little without the Heart, how shall the Heart, alas! do any thing without

out itself? 'Tis thus I call the exercise of Piety and the Service of God. Can a Lute play that is not scrued and set, or can a Bow be drawn that is not bent and strung? The heart of Man is as an Instrument or Lute; whose Musick charms the very Ears of God, but then it must be tun'd with all its Vertues, as so many strings, and Devotion must be as it were a kind of Soul to move and actuate all the rest. Prayer is a Dart that flies to Heaven, but 'tis Devotion only gives it Strength and Wings. Prayer is a Sacrifice, the Calves of the Lips, and offering of the Heart. One should not willingly present to God the common Victims, without choice and without preparation: the Paschal Lamb was separated from the rest of the flock four days before it was sacrificed. Offer not then to God your Prayers cold and impure, but separate your Hearts from all these worldly Vanities, and from the croud of sinful Thoughts, if you would have it acceptable in the sight of God.

Dead is the Soul without Devotion, and the heart a very Carcase; what rashness were it then to lay a dead, corrupted Beast before God's sacred Altars? Will he not say to those indevout Souls, I hate, I despise your Feasts, I will not regard the Peace-offerings of your fat Beasts, nor the sweet Perfumes and Incense that you offer me, I cannot bear them. Devotion is a fire without which our Sacrifices cannot be consum'd or made perfect:

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'tis a Fire that comes down from Heaven, and an emanation of the Rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and that must carry up to Heaven the smoke of our Incense. Believe it, Christians, that without Devotion our Prayers will falter by the way, and will be never able to penetrate those thick gross Clouds of Errors and of Sins that part us from our God. The matter that makes up those heavy massy Thunderbolts, could never have ascended up into the middle Region of the Air, had they not once been carried up upon the Wings of some inflamed Exhalations. So neither can our Hearts, our earthly Prayers ascend to Heaven, unless the flames of strong Devotion bear them up.

I return therefore to this, that we ought to put our Hearts in good condition, that we may look for good Success upon our serving God: And yet all the Preparation we can make of our Hearts, will never make them good enough for him, to whom we offer them. He will do us a very great Favour, if he accept of them even in their best Condition. What therefore can we look for but a shameful sad Refusal, if we offer him an undevout Soul? God does not hear Mens Prayers, if the Heart be not well dispos'd to make them. *Seek and ye shall find*, says our Lord, but seek earnestly, for otherwise you shall not find. It is but once that God hath said, *I was found of them that sought me not*: This does not happen every Day; these are singular Events which make  
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### Ch. III. of Christian Devotion. 19

no Rules; the common Law is this, *Ask, and it shall be given*, take the Kingdom of Heaven by violence, and thou shalt obtain it.

For what is not Devotion good? It is of use in all Places, at all Times, and in all Things, in Churches and in Closets; by it we hear the Word pronounc'd by Men, but, as it truly is, the Word of God, and we receive it as the parched Ground takes in the Rain. By it the consideration of God's Benefits affects us, the remembrance of his Love inflames us, his Promises comfort, his Threats amaze us, and his Consolations work upon our Hearts. Without this, the Word which should be as a two-edg'd Sword, is blunted on the hardness of our Heart; and without this we add the crime of Insensibility to that of Impenitence. By this we look on every Thing within the Church with Veneration, the Preacher as the Messenger of God, his Word as a Voice from Heaven, the Faithful as God's Children, and as so many Troops of Angels that rejoice in his Presence; his Sacraments as precious Vessels, which to appearance are contemptible, but which communicate the Treasures of God's Grace and Mercy. This true Devotion makes our Closets little Temples, where the Divinity descends, and over which he spreads his Wings, as the Cherubim did theirs over the Propitiatory. This Devotion causes God to speak to us, as we to him; and makes us hear his Oracles, and taste his Consolations, when he says, *Son, or Daughter, be of good courage, arise, thy*

*sins are forgiven thee.* Oh happy Soul whom God thus honours with these blessed Entertainments! Now this is never done but by ardent Devotion; till we have called upon him, nay, till we have forced him in some measure to it. These desires of Devotion may well be those Eyes of which the Spouse speaks, *Cant. 6. 5. Turn away thine Eyes from me, for they have overcome me.* Hence ye profane Ones, that know not the use of Devotion. You say that Courage is the Rampart of Estates, the publick and the private Security: That Liberality sweetens the Misfortunes of the miserable; that Justice is the Nurse of Peace and Bond of Society, that Temperance gives tranquility to the Soul and health to the Body, but that Devotion of all Vertues is good for just nothing, that it effeminates the Soul and intimidates the Mind. Call not that Universal Vertue useles, without which all the rest are but as Shadows; for he that has not a habit of Devotion, and refers not all his Vertues to the Glory of God, is a false Virtuoso. Call not that Vertue useles that appeases the wrath of God, that diverts the Storms and Tempests from Estates; that would have rescued *Sodom* from the Fire, had there but been ten righteous Persons in it, that like *Abraham* had devoutly interceded for it. A Vertue that so often saves the Vessel of the Church from Shipwrack, that fills the Conscience with profound Peace and heavenly Light. Say not that it effeminates Souls, when it raises and strengthens  
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Mens Hearts, and makes them run to Death, despise Dangers, and spare nothing in occasions, where the Glory of God calls and engages them.

## M E D I T A T I O N.

Behold then, one of the causes of my Coldness; one of the Reasons why my Soul has so little Devotion, is this, that it comprehends not sufficiently the necessity of this great Vertue. It knows that Aliments are necessary to the conservation of the Body, and therefore it desires them with great earnestness, and seeks for them with wondrous diligence; but it is negligent of every Thing that serves to nourish Piety and Devotion, because it believes not them to be either necessary or useful. Thou seest, O my Soul, abundance of People save themselves by a dead and faint Devotion, and go to Heaven by very slow Steps, and thou persuadest thy self that God will not be more rigorous to thee, or exact more of thee than of others; but Oh this is a false and fatal way of reasoning! He whom thou thinkest is in the way to Heaven, is in the way perhaps to Hell. There is a way that seemeth right in the sight of Men, but the Issues of it tend to Death. These coldnesses with which thou thinkest God content, are always insignificant; 'twill be but cold comfort to be able one Day to say, We have prayed to thee, we have call'd upon thee, we have serv'd thee; when our Lord shall notwithstanding answer, I know not who ye are, go hence, de-

part.



part from me, ye that are neither cold nor hot,  
I spew you out of my Mouth.

### P R A Y E R.

Lead me, O God, conduct my Soul in the  
sure path: I cannot sound thy mercy, but  
I know not whither thou wilt carry the  
rigors of thy Justice. I cannot tell if thou  
wilt pardon so many people that serve thee  
with so little zeal, and so much indevotion;  
but this I know, they are not worthy of  
thy clemency, unless they shall sincerely sor-  
row for their having served thee so coldly.  
Light of my soul, thou heavenly Spirit, that  
hast illuminated thy Church and Faithful in  
all Ages, inspire in me such sentiments of  
true Devotion, as I most certainly know  
are necessary to the saving of my soul, and  
without which I cannot but be hopeless of  
thy favour. Kindle my heart, and let it be  
an Altar of perpetual fire, where all my sa-  
crifices may be spent, and from whence my  
Prayers may ascend as the Incense, and as  
the Evening sacrifice.

### C H A P.

CHAP. IV.

*That Devotion is exceeding rare, and neglected.*

THE Rarity of Devotion is an exception to that general Rule, that says, *Things rare are always much valued.* There is nothing rarer in the World than true Devotion, yet nothing more neglected. Men do not offend in this Point through Ignorance; they very well know, that without a devout Disposition it is impossible our Prayers should please God. But yet 'tis hard to express the fearful Negligence with which Men do this Exercise of Piety, as well as all the rest. They come to it with a prodigious Slowness; 'tis plainly Custom and not Inclination draws them to it; 'tis fear of Blows and Punishment that makes them march like Slaves, as to a Work of Pain and Difficulty: 'Tis what we do against our Wills, and as little of it as is possible. If we steal a Quarter of an Hour from the World, to give it to God, we persuade our selves presently, we are excellent good Christians: when we are at Prayers we make all haste to have done quickly, as tho' 'twere something troublesome and inconvenient to us; and when we have done we think we are at Ease again. Can that be well, that is done thus?

thus? Or how can we pray to God as we should, when we consider not what 'tis we are to ask? When we would pray, we ought to represent to our selves with all respect and lowliness the Majesty of him, before whom we are to appear; so that we come not thither in an hasty inconsiderate Way, as though we were to speak to some mean Man. If we observe it well, the Body is upon the Mountain, when the Heart is yet in *Sodom*; the Mind is wandring round the World, and roaming even in imaginary Spaces, diverting it self with fanciful and empty Speculations. The greatest Part of us turn our Prayers over our Tongues, and let them run like a Stream, but the Heart has little or no Share in them; and if it has, the Impression is so weak, that within a Moment's Space it perfectly disappears. And should we when we rise from our Devotions, but examine if our Faith, our Hope, or Charity have received any considerable Increase, we should be certainly confounded with Shame; bus alas, we think of nothing less than such Enquiries; we run immediately where Interest or Pleasure calls, and think no farther on the Duty. 'Tis certain that the greatest Part, after their Prayers, may find their Conscience in a worse Condition than before; so that this Examination instead of producing Peace should augment their Disquiets; and if their Prayers be indevout, what are the rest of their Performances? If when we hear the Word of God, we give any Attention,

tention, 'tis rather to the way of speaking them, than to the Things themselves. If the Preacher hath not the Gift of pleasing, we do not hear nor edify at all ; there's nothing, we say, that can keep us awake, and then we think we may sleep the Sermon out without so much as hurting the Conscience at all. And thus we speak to Men that are deaf, and our Churches from whence we have banish'd Images, are yet fill'd with Idols, *that have eyes and see not, and ears that hear not.* The Preacher seems to have *Medusa's Head* in his Hands, that when he appears turns all to Marble, and the Word of God is a Charm that maketh Stones of *Abraham's Children*, instead of making *Abraham Children* out of Stones. A great part of Hearers remember nothing else than what they think the worst, to furnish Matter for their Censures or profane Wits ; an excellent Thing is quite neglected, but an unlucky One is soon recovered ; that is, in a fair Field richly adorned, they gather here a Thorn, and there a Leaf, and overlook the Flowers and Fruit. Those that do least evil in this way, hear, and would fain make good use of what they hear ; but 'tis alas but an imperfect Will, that does not long abide, but almost ends together with the Sermon. But oh, what Indevotion, and what Coldness is there not, in partaking of the Lord's Supper, that venerable Sacrament wherein Christ distributes to us his Flesh to eat, and his Blood to drink ! Piety is not now divided into a



croud of different Services and Worships, as it was heretofore under the Law, but is reduc'd to two or three Ceremonies, and to one Sacrament for grown up Persons. We should therefore recollect all our Devotion upon this Occasion, and give to this sole Gage of God's Love, all that Zeal and Ardor that the *Israelites* were oblig'd to shew in all the several Services commanded by the Law. A Flame that's scattered burns but little, the Rays of the Sun at large, heat but indifferently, but when collected in the Centre of a Burning-glass, they burn up Wood and melt down Metals. It would be so if our Devotion could unite in this Divine Object, it might consume all our Vanities, and melt down all the Ice and cold Affections of the Soul; if we were but truly devout in the Participation of this holy Sacrament, our Faith would penetrate through all Appearances and contemptible Outfides, to contemplate on, within, the broken Body of the Son of God, and all the Mysteries of our Salvation. But here we stop at what we see, and come as it were to an ordinary Meal, and bring our Indevotion thither, and carry nothing thence but Condemnation.

By what we see in Publick, we conjecture at what is done in Private, and 'tis a hard matter to judge favourably of the Devotions of the Closet, when there is so little Reason to be satisfied with what we see in Churches: If nothing is done for glory and the pleasure of being approved and prais'd; to what De-

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grees will not Zeal relax, when there shall be no Witnesses at all? Let us not then be thought to violate the Rights of Privacy, if we say that private Devotions are more carelessly perform'd than publick Ones; for without doubt he that sleeps at Sermon will hardly keep awake at simple Reading, where the Words want Sound, and Voice, and Tone to hinder Men from sleeping. But every Man on Earth ('tis said) has his Fault, and all Conditions have their Failings. The Tradesman is for Gain, and covetous, and oftentimes a Cheat: The Courtier is ambitious: The Magistrate is corrupt: The Poor impatient; and the Rich ones proud. But we may say, that Indevotion is the fault of all *Professions* in the World; and one would say of all *Men*, if by the Grace of God there were not yet some good Souls, that sigh in Spirit for the evil State of others, and themselves, that pour out their Sorrows before God with abundance of Zeal, and that delight in his Sabbaths and Service. But alas, how rare are such Examples! it may be we shall hardly find ten such as these in *Sodom*; and since Exceptions overthrow not Rules, we cannot but cry out on this our Age, as on an Age of Ice and Iron.

## MEDITATION.

I am called to examine other Men; I see very well that Devotion is very rare in the World. This ought to trouble me exceedingly for the share I have my self in God's Interests. This ought to terrify me not a little, that the whole World become not Universal Sodom, or be made like Gomorrha, and God should pour his Vengeance on it, in Deluges and storms of Fire and Brimstone. But there is something touches me more near, and that is the rarity of Devotion in my own heart: This wretched Heart is Ice and Marble all over. How is it possible it should remain insensible amidst so many Objects that are capable of moving it? How can it prove unthankful, when encompass'd with so many of God's Favours? How is it, that it does not tremble before him, whose presence even the Angels tremble at? How is it, that my Soul so thirsty and so destitute of all good Things, should not with ardor hasten to that pure refreshing Spring? I cannot draw one tear from out my Eyes, no nor one sigh from out my Heart. I every Day present my self before him with dry Eyes, with my Body in an humble Posture, but with a Soul all Pride, and oft with such an air of Negligence, that even the tone of my Voice, my Actions, and in general, all that is visible speaks out my Indevotion. How often have I quarrel'd with my Heart, and said within my self, Oh wretched Heart, why dost thou not tremble within me? Why art not thou afraid of him, whom thou canst never fear enough? Why dost not thou  
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love him infinitely, who infinitely hath lov'd thee? Didst thou but fear and love this thy adorable Creator as thou shouldst, whom all the Angels love and fear, thou never couldst be cold in his Service, nor worship in so faint and languishing a Manner.

## P R A Y E R.

Thou seest, alas, my God, thou seest, how I lament and sigh beneath the burthen of my corruption and my indevotion. Ah help me to rid my self of them, to the end the motions of piety and zeal thou lovest so dearly, may be as frequent for the time to come, as hitherto they have been rare. Let them no more resemble those poor sparks that rise at a great distance from an heap of Embers that are now cooling and extinguishing: But let them be as those pure flames that burn continually, even in the midst of Waters, and may withstand the storms and tempests of Temptation, of Corruption, and of Ill-examples. Instead of suffering me to be born away by the floods of corruption and indevotion that flow even in the sanctuary it self: Let my Piety shine forth, I pray thee, as a bright Lamp amidst the darkness of this World.



## C H A P. V.

*That Indevotion is a greater Fault  
than we think for.*

**I** Speak not of the Indevotion of the Profane, but of theirs that would be call'd God's Children. I speak of those Negligences, cold Distractions, and vain sensual Thoughts that cross their Exercises of Devotion. That which makes this Fault so common, is, the Opinion Men have, that 'tis so very small, and so inevitable, that 'tis not needful to take any great care to hinder or prevent it. There is nothing but is said and thought on to excuse and flatter one's self in this fault. We say 'tis the Nature of the Soul to be active and stirring, that it cannot fix upon one Object, that Thoughts fly out and vent themselves, then, when we think to hold them strongliest in; It is, we say, the Distemper of the Soul, and which it is not to be blamed for. Now though it were an Evil altogether involuntary, yet sure it were but reasonable to deplore our Misfortune in that it is so: 'Tis certainly a Mark of an irregular Soul, and a Proof that Sin hath caused terrible disorders there. If you should see a Man, in the midst of a Discourse full of good Sense, break out upon the sudden, and say a thousand

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land Extravagancies, you would say undoubtedly his Mind was mightily disorder'd; and is it not a Proof the Heart is so too, when 'you perceive that it is carried off amidst its devout Thoughts, and all upon the sudden rambles from its Subject, and it self, to lose it self in a thousand wild Chimerical Imaginations? But besides all this, I say, there is a Fault as well as a Misfortune in this Mischief; 'tis enough to know that Sin is the Cause of this Disorder, to rest assur'd that there is Sin in having and in suffering it. The Production of so criminal a Cause cannot be innocent. I own, that the lower Part of the Soul, corrupted by Sin is like the Fenny-grounds, where Vapours rise continually and are sometimes so thick that they obscure the Sun it self. Our Passions, it is true, raise Clouds of vain and evil Thoughts, that hinder us sometimes from seeing our great Sun of Righteousness. But what then? Does it follow hence, that this is no great Evil? All other Crimes flow from this Source, but are they therefore the less Crimes?

We imagine that the Mind of Man cannot fix, but this is false, and a thousand Experiences convince us it is so. Were you to plead before some Mighty Prince in behalf of your Life, you would think so steadily thereon that you would think of nothing else, and when you spoke would suffer no Distractions. When a covetous Man is counting up his Monies, he will hardly hear you when you

knock at his Closet Door. A Man that is taken up with some important Business, and has set his Heart thereon, finds no such wild Distractions of Imagination. In a Word, we can sit whole Days attentively to hear a Comedy, or somewhat else we like as well. It would not therefore be so hard, would we but try in right good Earnest, to put a stop to this Lightness of Spirit, of which we complain, as though it were an Evil incurable. But in this Vice of Indevotion, there is a certain Pride of Heart that will not suffer us to be thoroughly humbled before God, before whose Presence universal Nature trembles.

I would fain know if a King would take it well, that in doing him Honour, a Man should turn his Back upon him, and do him Homage with an Air of disdain? Yet this is that we do continually to God. We do not give him half our Hearts. Can it be thought a little Sin, to despise and neglect him whom the Angels worship? *The Lord is King, let the Earth stand in awe*, is what we seldom think, or say to our selves; and because God does not speedily avenge the Outrage done his Majesty, we get a Habit of neglecting him, without concern or fear.

Were there no other Thing in Indevotion, but the Crime of Disobedience, it were enough to make us worthy of the severest Punishment. We know very well, that God commands Respect, Ardor and Zeal; we cannot but remember, we are called upon,

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to take the Kingdom of Heaven by Violence; we hear say every Day, *he spews the lukewarm out of his mouth*; we read every where, that the Life of the Faithful ought to be a swift Race, and no slow Pace; and we know he would have us eaten up with the Zeal of his House: Yet to the Prejudice of all these Orders, if not in their Desiance, we are disrespectful, cold and languid. Ah, who shall be obey'd, if God is not? He who maketh the Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a flaming Fire; he who hath so many Means to avenge him of his Rebels, and recompence the Obedient, and whose Commands are always just, and always holy!

Tell me not then, this Want of Application to the Exercises of Devotion, is a slight Fault, it is a most assured Proof we love not God. 'Tis not at this rate we pursue the Things of this World. *Seek for Wisdom as for Silver, and search for her as hidden Treasures, with all diligence*, says the wise Man. Oh, would to God that we could make a Change of Thoughts, and give those to this World which we have for heavenly Things, and those we have for heavenly Things, unto this World. Is it not a Crime, do we think, not greatly to abhor the refusing God that Ardor and Attention, and Engagement that we have for the Things of this Life? A Fault that deprives us of God, is no slight Thing; a Fault that robs us of the divine Consolations is not to be neglected or despis'd. 'Tis by this Fault it comes, that  
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we so little feel the Sweetnesses that are in true Devotion, because that *God will not be found except of those that seek him*, nor gives those Heavenly Consolations but to such as ardently desire them, and that pant after them, *as pants the Heart after the living Brooks*.

But let us presuppose with these Consciences that flatter thus themselves, that these Distractions and these Languors of Devotion are but Sins of Infirmary, and consequently such as shall not be severely punish'd; yet what shall we say to their Number, and our every Days Relapses to them? Shall this too go for nothing? *If thou despisest Sins for being small, yet be afraid because they are great in number*, saith *S. Austin*: although they should appear light in the Balance of the Sanctuary, yet the Sum will undo us. For 'tis the Work of every Day. There is nothing smaller than Grains of Sand, yet if you heap them up, they make a Hill; Step by Step we go to Hell, 'tis no great Matter then, what 'tis that leads us thither, whether one mighty Sin, or abundance of little ones; one is nevertheless damned. The *Egyptians* that had nought but Frogs or Flies upon them, were notwithstanding brought to the last Extremity. Then let us not call those Sins small, that without God's gracious Pardon, will precipitate the Offenders down to Hell. But let us say with *Anselm*, *It may be thou believest some of thy Sins are small*. Oh would to God, that our severe Judge would think them so too; but does not every Sin dishonour God by Disobedience?

dience? How is it then that we call those Sins but small that offend so great a God? O dry and useles Tree, fit for eternal Flame, what canst thou answer at the great Day, when thou shalt give an Account of every Motion of thy Eye, when all thy Life-time shall be put in a Balance, and thou shalt be demanded how thou hast employed it every Minute? Then shall thy Process be made for every Thing that did concern thee, not only for thy Words, but also for thy ill-tim'd Silence, and thy least Thoughts shall be examin'd; thy Life it self shall become part of thy Crime, if 'twas not liv'd to God. O lamentable State! How many Sins shall then proceed, from whence thou now seest none at all! They shall take thee unprovided, and as it were in Ambuscade, and then they shall appear more terrible and more in Number: The Things thou thinkest now not Evil, or that thou thinkest good perhaps, shall then appear both black and frightful. *This Difference, says S. Basil, of great and small Sins is never found in all the New Testament, one Sentence is pronounc'd against them all; He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin; and if we give our selves the Liberty of distinguishing betwixt great and little Sins, it ought to be in this Sense, that that should be a great Sin by which we are overcome, and that a little one we conquer; as amongst the Wrestlers, he that fell was always thought the weakest, and he that stood the strongest. Then happy is the Man that possesses himself*

self with this Fear, and rids himself of that strong dangerous Prejudice, that Indevotion is so light and pardonable a Sin.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

This is a meer Illusion, against which there is great need that I should fortify my Heart. Ah! what an Inclination have I to flatter and deceive my self in my Sins, and to believe them little ones! Poor heart, thou art not sensible of thy disease, but thinkest thou art well, when thou art tending towards certain death; 'tis a most dangerous distemper that, to think that one is well when one is otherwise. Open thine Eyes, my heart, and see the danger thou art in continually. My sins do now appear but little ones, but they will one day appear great, as they truly are. Defer no longer then to acknowledge the greatness, and to feel their burthen and their weight, to the end I may have them at present in abhorrence, and for the future may repent in dust and ashes; for otherwise I may repent too late, and acknowledge my evil without finding a Remedy. I drink up sins, as Fishes drink up water, I see nothing frightful in them, because I am accusom'd to the sight, and I think them little ones because I compare them still with greater ones; and above all, I count my Indevotion and my Deadness nothing, because I persuade my self that God cannot be offended but by Impieties and Blasphemies.

### P R A Y E R.

## P R A Y E R.

This comes, my God, from hence, that I conceive not thee so great as thou indeed art; and I conceive not thee so great as thou art, because I see thee not. I tremble at the presence of a Man seated on a Tribunal with a scepter in his hand, and a crown upon his head, surrounded with royal pomp. I am afraid of him because I see him; the Objects that strike my senses astonish my soul. I know that thou art set amidst the cherubims, and that the Angels hide their faces in thy sight, and cannot bear the lustre of thy Majesty. I know that floods of fire roll fast before thy Throne to consume thy enemies. I know that neither humane nor angelick sight can bear the splendors of thy Looks, nor the flamings of thy Eyes; and I believe these wondrous things, and see them not, and therefore 'tis, they make so small impression on my heart. I am sensible of nothing but things present: My eyes are more affected with the darkness of the Night, and with the glimmerings of a Glow-worm, than my imagination moved with the light of the absent Sun that's shining in another Hemisphere. Draw back then, O my God, draw back this curtain from before my eyes, and let me see  
thy



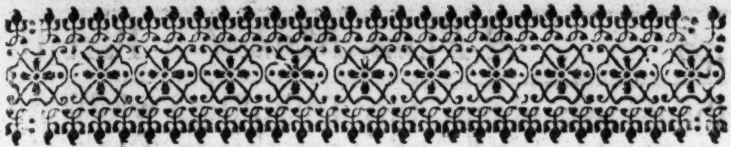
thy Majesty; redouble thou the light of my  
 soul's eyes: Fill my imagination with the I-  
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## SECOND PART.



### CHAP. I.

*That Impurity of Life is the first  
Source of Indevotion.*



HIS Indevotion is a great Evil, let us try to find its Sources out, to the end we may cut this Mischief off at the Head. One of the Chief is Impurity of Life: There is nothing disorders the Heart so much as a habitude of Sin, nothing that quenches the Fire of Piety, like the foul troubled Waters of an unclean Life. Fire does not easily take hold of wet Wood; Devotion does not easily fasten on vicious Souls. Devotion and Sin are incomparable for several Reasons: One Flame extinguishes another, and the Fire of Lusts stifles the Fire of Zeal, as the Flame of Powder puts out the Light of a Candle. Devotion is a certain Sprightliness of Mind that disposes us to approach to God with Confidence and Trust; but how  
should

Should we obtain this Disposition whilst we continue in Sin? And is not this to offer up to God such Sacrifices as we know he has in abomination? For God, we know, will have no sullied and polluted Offerings; *Go get ye gone,* says he, *I hate your solemn Feasts; as for your Offerings of Rams, and the fat of fed Beasts I take them as I do price of Whoredom, as Swines Blood, and a Dog's Neck.* Alas! the purest Man is not yet pure enough to present himself before his God with good Assurance; and the Prophets themselves may say, *What shall I do, I am undone, I am a Man of unclean lips, mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.* It cannot be, but that he who has not on the Marriage-Garment, but is sullied with the Impurities of the flesh, should not be terribly afraid of him, before whom the Stars are darkness, and the Angels are not clean; and how then shall this Fear, or rather Horror, be consistent with Devotion, which is all Love, and all Assurance? *Let us go,* says S. Paul, *with boldness to the Throne of grace to obtain mercy in the time of need.* To present to God a Conscience full of Sin, is to carry our Witeness along with us, and make our own Process, and deliver our selves into the Hands of Justice. We need not therefore wonder that a wicked Man is indevout, and that he flies God's Presence. But though Impurity of Life should do no other Thing but take away all Hope of having our Prayers heard, 'twould be enough to hinder our Devotion; all

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all other Virtues are concern'd in this, and he that takes away their Hopes, takes away their Life also. How can a wicked Man then pray devoutly, that knows God will not hear him? *When ye stretch out your hands and multiply your prayers, I will not answer you, saith God, because your hands are full of blood.* Therefore S. Paul would have us *lift up clean hands without wrath, and without contention.* And David says, *If there had been iniquity in me, the Lord had not heard me.* Therefore in another Place he protests, *he will wash his hands in innocency, and so will he go to his Altar.* And why should God have Respect to their Prayers, who have none to his Commands? Upon these Principles the wicked may well say, To what purpose should I present my self before God? My Sins have shut the Gates of Heaven upon me, and why should I ask any thing of him, that is resolv'd already to deny me? These would be but insignificant Devotions and Submissions, that; it may be, might but hasten Judgments on me. I could not have the Face to ask for any thing, unless God first had promis'd it, but I resolve to hold to nothing, but to continue in the Way I am in. Devotion is of great Extent, it takes up all the Heart, it cannot stay in any Soul divided betwixt it and Ambition, Avarice, Violence, love of the World and Pleasures. If then you see sometimes a Worldling that refuses nothing to his Heart, have his set Days of regular Devotion, nay, and sometimes break into Floods

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of



of Tears and bitter Sorrows; conclude undoubtedly that those are Hypocrites, that would pay God with Looks, and impose on Men with fair Appearances. There are, it may be, some that are the Cheats of their own Hearts, and think they are very good Men, when they expiate for the Debauches of a Month, by one Days fasting. But they are greatly out, for true Devotion is not thus unequal, nor full of Sallies and Irregularities. It is not like the Floods in Spring that flow with Fury, but continue but a Day: Innocence of Life is therefore of absolute Necessity to the attaining true Devotion, and a necessary Preliminary. This Vertue is one of those most excellent Graces we receive from Heaven, and one of the most precious Gifts of the Holy Ghost; but 'tis a Pearl that is not cast before Swine, 'tis an Enamel only fit for Gold; a Favour only communicated to privileg'd, that is to say, to pure and clean Souls. But because we shall meet with this Subject again, we will not exhaust it here.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

*Who can express the evils and disorders sin hath brought upon the Soul? Who can cast up the miseries, in which the naughtiness of my Heart hath engag'd me? and amongst the rest is this, that it renders me incapable of Devotion. 'Tis sin hath made a separation betwixt God and me, and there-*  
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fore I am dead, for God is my life, and my soul's Soul; I am blind and strayed from God, that is my Light: I am poor, being separated from him, for he was my Treasure and Abundance. I am naked, for he alone it was that cloathed me: I am sick, for it was he, my Son of Righteousness, that carries healing in his wings, that was my health and strength. 'Tis sin hath rob'd me of him, and eclips'd him from my sight, and I must languish out my Life, divided from him that was and is my Principle. And in this state, Oh how can I produce those vigorous movements of Devotion, that raise the Soul and carry it up as far as Paradise? Sin is that thick humidity that fastens on my Wings; a weight that overwhelms me; that stops my Sallies, and makes all my Efforts and Attempts both vain and profitless. I feel in my Members a Law that fights with, and opposes the Law of my Understanding, and maketh me a slave to Sin; so that I cannot do even what I would of Good, but do the Evil that I would not.

P R A Y E R.

Sun of my soul! come, dissipate these clouds. Thou great Deliverer, come and break these bonds, open this prison, cause this baselinge of sin to cease and have an end. Thou art more pure than I am impure, more powerful than I am wretched, and more alive than I am dead. Withdraw me

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from

from this wretched state, this miserable nothing. Disengage me from beneath the weight of my corruption, that I may go with cheerfulness, or rather fly with swiftness to thee. Pardon my sins, that they no longer terrify my soul, and fright me from thy Throne. Stop thou the course of my iniquities, that they may no longer hinder my prayers from mounting up unto thy Throne. Permit me not still to continue making my self unworthy of thy favours, by abusing them, and grieving the Holy Ghost by my impurities of life. 'Tis he alone that can inspire this Ardoz that I seek; He alone can make my soul devout, his presence only kindles my Affections; but will he deign his lights to so polluted and so dark a soul as mine? prepare thy self within me lodgings fit for such a mighty Guest, that he may come and animate me, that I may live and love thee, and may burn with the fire of thy Love, and that of true Devotion.

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## C H A P. II.

*Of the Love of the World, the second Source of Indevotion.*

ONE of the greatest Reasons why there are so few truly devout Ones in the World, is, that the World is too much belov'd; and this World's Love is one of the most powerful Temptations that the Devil uses, to distract and turn our Hearts aside. This Love hath pierc'd into our very inwards, and whilst it governs in our Hearts, how should the Love of God come there? For Light and Darknes, Fire and Water, Life and Death, are not more incompatible than those two Sorts of Love. *He that loveth the world, the love of the Father dwelleth not in him.* And where there is no love of God, how shall there be Devotion? for what is it but this same Love that makes the zeal and fire of true Devotion? What is it but this Love that creates those ardent longings after Union with God in the devout Souls? What is it else that gives such Pleasure in possession of him? 'Tis this that gives good Souls that readiness and chearfulness in serving God: 'Tis this that maketh all Things easy to the Soul that loves. Now then as much as the Love of God forwards Devotion, so much the Love of this World hinders it; it quenches the devout Ardors, stifles good Desires, estranges us from God,



God, takes away all Relish of Things spiritual, and steals away the Heart, and carries it away we know not whither. *Lot's* Wife was going towards the Hills, but still she had her Heart in *Sodom*, and thither turns her Eyes. The superior part of the Soul, that loves the Things of Heaven, makes some Efforts to raise it self to God; but the inferior Part, where all the Passions reign, turns the Eyes towards the World, and withdraws the Heart from the Divine Commerce which it began to enter on with God. When *Rachel* left her Father's House, she took away with her his *Teraphims*: So when we leave the World and enter into our Closets, we carry with us all its Idols and vain Images, and those unhappy Thoughts that will be crossing our Devotion. These are the Idols of Gold and Silver, the Devil's Avarice and Ambition, that pass and repass a hundred Times in a quarter of an Hour to distract our Minds, and spoil us of Attention. Our Brains, when we come to Prayer, are fill'd with a thousand Ideas of good and evil things, Desires and Fears, of Dangers and Distrusts, Hope and Despair, Sports and Divertisements, with other vain Objects. And can a Soul already thus possess'd give place to any Images of God's Greatness, his Majesty, Goodness, Mercy and Love? Can Faith, Repentance, Charity, Zeal, Hope, Gratitude, and other Vertues that make up, or are any ways helpful to Devotion; can they, I say, consist with the Movements that the Commerce of this World

World inspires us with ? We can hardly think of any Thing but what our Hearts are taken withal : If we lov'd the World less, it would not so often return upon our Minds : We are charm'd therewith, it is a Spirit that we cannot find a place of Refuge against its Persecutions ; the solitude and dismal Objects of the Desert cannot banish it. An Ancient tells us, That amidst his macerating Mortifications, his Imagination brought him in the Wilderness, a Troop of beauteous Maids, in Jollity and Dance. We must therefore employ all our Strength and Abilities to drain this fruitful Source, if we would be truly devout. *My little Children, love not the World, nor the things of the World.* We must crucify the old Man, if we would present our selves to God a living Sacrifice, holy, and acceptable, which is our reasonable Service. Thus one of the most useful Meditations, by which we may prepare our selves for Prayer, is this, of the Vanity of the World. 'Tis good to enter into ones self, to consider the shortness of human Life, the inconstant glory of the World that flourishes in the Morning, and at the Evening fades away. 'Tis good to say, and say again within one's Heart, what the Holy Ghost has said before. *All flesh is grass, and the glory of it as the flower of the Field, the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth.* Thou carriest them away as with a Flood, they are as a Sleep in the Morning, they are as Grass that groweth up. *The days of man are as grass, the wind passeth over*

over it and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more. Man that is born of a Woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of trouble, he passeth away as a shadow that flieth, and cometh not again. His Riches vanish, but his Sins abide; his Honours leave him, but his Tormentors never do. And, it may be, whilst we cry out *Vanity of Vanities*, over this Heart infected with the putrid Air of this World, we shall chase away these worldly Thoughts, it may be drive those filthy Birds away that come to spoil our Sacrifice, and to devour that good Seed of Piety, which the heavenly Husbandman hath sown there.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

O wretched that I am! 'tis to great purpose truly, that I cry out *Vanity of Vanities*, over my heart infected with this world's love, since it becomes no whit the better for it. I am sufficiently persuaded of every thing that's said; I know very well, that the World is made up of nothing but Appearances: I know very well, it covers all its gall and wormwood with a little Honey; I know very well, its Pleasures are as so many Nets to ensnare the Soul, and drag it unto Death, but I know not how this knowledge takes possession of my Understanding, but makes no manner of Impression on my Will. I believe, I see, and yet I do nothing. I see a thousand and a thousand People plung'd in the corruptions of the World, and led thereby to Hell. I see it is a mighty Enemy to Christ my Saviour, and  
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that the first thing it attempts, is to remove from out their hearts the love of God, who have given up their Names to his Service. It is a wicked and a dangerous thing, I know 'tis so, but yet I cannot break those Bonds that tie me to it. I fly it, it pursues me, it catches me in every place, and I am never free. Oh my heart, make one brave Effort now at last, to break these cursed Chains, and to divorce thee from this Enemy. Say to him loudly, Get thee hence, behind me Satan, thou art an offence. Love of the World is an Enemy to the love of God, but so is God's love an Enemy to it. Oh then, my Soul, receive into thy heart the love of God, that it may keep out thence the love of the World: Commit these Enemies, and set them once together, and take be sure that Party thou wouldst save, against the other thou wouldst quite destroy. Love him that loveth thee, although sometimes he strike as though he lov'd thee not. Hate him that hates thee, though he seem to love thee above all things else. Give to this ardent Lover, such a love as that he bears to thee, and merits from thee.

## P R A Y E R.

But, Oh my God, I neither can love thee, nor hate the world without thee. Pluck up this bitter root that's springing up, and would divert my growing upwards towards thee: Open mine eyes; draw the world's curtain up, remove the mask, and paint wherewith the world is drest and covered,

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that I may see its native ugliness, and learn to have it in abhorrence. On the other side, cause me to see thy face, and all thy beauty, that my Soul may be there: with ravish'd, and I no longer may pursue the world's vanities. Enrich me with thy goods, that my Soul may be fixed in the enjoyment of thy Love. Then shall I run thy ways with all my might; then shall my Soul be fill'd with that celestial Fire, that never can be stopp'd from raising up it self to thee, with all the Ardor that one ought in reason to pursue the sovereign Good withal. Then shall my soul in its Devotions be no longer troubled with the vain Idols of the world, nor with its Fantomes; but fill'd with thee, my God, and with thy Love, shall have no room for any other passion.

### C H A P. III.

*Of too great Sensibility of earthly Pleasures, the third Source of Indevotion.*

**T**HE love of the World is as a great Tree spreading into several Branches, which are as so many Sources of Indevotion. The first

first Branch of this Love, is a too great sensibility of earthly Pleasures. These Pleasures are of two sorts: The first are highly Criminal, and are those we call the Debauches of the Gallants of the World; and of these it is certain, that not only an excessive sensibility, but even the least taste, is a mortal Enemy to Devotion. Spiritual Pleasures are of so different a Relish from those of the Flesh, that one cannot at the same Time love the one and the other. A Palate used to Gall and Wormwood, and that tastes no other Thing, can never bear the sweets of Sugar and Honey. A Man that's plung'd into the pleasures of Sin, can have no gust or relish for the Joys of Heaven. There is another kind of Pleasures, whose Innocence the World maintains, because the Fault is not so visible: But as innocent as they either are, or may be, they quickly become criminal by their Excess. The continuation of Diversions (the most innocent) becomes an Abuse, and may become great hindrances to Piety, as little sensible as we are of the mischief. The holy Spirit is call'd the *Comforter*, and the Relish that the faithful find in exercises of Devotion, are call'd *Divine Consolations*. But to what and whom are Comforters and Comforts given, but to the afflicted? In truth, those Souls that are so full of the Joys of this World, are not very fit to receive the spiritual Consolations, and salutary Impressions of the Divine Comforter. 'Tis therefore Jesus Christ says, *Blessed are they that*  
F 2 *mourn,*

mourn, for they shall be comforted. And S. Augustin said to God, Thou art the only true, the only Sovereign Pleasure, that art capable of filling a Soul; remove far from me these false Pleasures, and at the same Time enter thou thy self into their place; thou who art sweeter, and more dear than all the Pleasures in the World, but not to Flesh and Blood. The 'Manna fell not on the Israelites, but when the Provisions fail'd, they brought with them from Egypt. Surely this Manna of Divine Grace, these Ravishments and Joys of Devotion, are not communicated to those who are stor'd with Magazines of Goods from Egypt, and the Pleasures of the World.

A Person that returns from a Ball or Comedy, must needs be very ill dispos'd for Devotion; 'twill be to little purpose to say in favour of the Theatre, that it is now become chaste, and that we meet with nothing there, but Lessons of Vertue. They may say, if they will, that Passions are only display'd there, as animated in defence of Honour, and produce no other Sentiments but those of Generosity. For my own part, I say, the Vertues of the Theatre are Crimes according to the Spirit of the Gospel; and though we may hear something that's good from thence, yet it is well-nigh spoil'd by the polluted Lips and Imaginations through which it passes. O impious wickedness, said Clement of Alexandria, thou hast brought Heaven upon the Stage, and God himself is become a Comedy. O impious wickedness, may I say too, in imitation of him, thou hast

hast brought Vertue on the Stage, and made it  
 look like a *Comedian*. Jesus Christ would not  
 have his Preachers appear in Trunkhose, with  
 Paint and Patches on their Faces. *Tragedy*,  
 said S. Cyprian, *revives the ancient Sins in its*  
*Verses, lest they should die with Age*; we draw  
 them from their Sepulchres of a thousand or  
 twelve hundred Years standing. We teach  
 the present Age, the Sins they might, per-  
 haps, have never thought on; they think  
 that what was heretofore done, may be done  
 as well at present: And thus we make Exam-  
 ples of those Actions that had ceased from  
 being Crimes and doing Mischief. And yet  
 this is *Tragedy* whose Innocence may be de-  
 fended best, and with the greatest Colour.  
 The *Lacedemonians*, who were very wise, ba-  
 nish'd these criminal Amusements from a-  
 mongst them, because, say they, it was not fit  
 to violate the Laws even in appearance, but  
 respect them even upon the Stage. And this  
 puts me in mind of what Cicero said upon a  
 Time; That it was not honest or fit for Philoso-  
 phers or Rhetoricians to exercise their Faculties,  
 though but in jest, against the existence or the pro-  
 vidence of God. We owe them this respect, not  
 to divert our selves at their Expence. And I say  
 the same of Vertue: It is not fitting to be  
 pleased with seeing it, or play'd upon, or out-  
 rag'd on the Theatre. But besides, these  
 Spectacles are absolutely inconsistent with  
 Devotion, because they fill the Soul with vain  
 Passions, and we have need to have our Souls



at liberty. They create real Joys and Sadnesses for imaginary Adventures; they fill the Mind with Images, and the Heart with Sentiments of Vanity, that quite destroy those holy Dispositions, that we would establish in a devout Soul.

It is the same with Play; 'tis a Madness that possesses men like a kind of Devil. A man sees roll, as one may say, his life and death, his good and evil fortune, in a little Box: he attends the throw with Inquietudes and inconceivable Transports; his Soul is agitated at the same with a thousand different Passions, of Fears, Desires and Hopes, &c. and his Heart is wholly out of its proper Station. Is such a man in fit condition to raise his Soul towards God? They would be fine Devotions, these that are made after having sat up almost all Night, at Gaming. The Tempest hath been too long, and the Floods will roll a great deal longer: the Soul will be a great while before she recovers her breath again; and after all, the sweets of Devotion will not relish to his taste, because they are not those Pleasures, of which alone she is sensible. And hence it comes that young Folks are so seldom fit for Flights and Elevations of Devotion. They enter presently upon the World, and every Thing appears beautiful, and carries with it the Charms of Novelty. They take long Draughts of sensual Pleasures, and nothing is agreeable but that which flatters Flesh and Blood that boils within their Veins. And hence it is, moreover,  
that

that that Temperament of Blood, where the Sanguine prevails, which is the Temperament of Joy and Pleasure, is less proper for Devotion, than that which takes in somewhat of the Earth and Melancholy. The first is like matter extremely combustible, that takes Fire at the first Spark; but the second is more difficult to stir, and is less sensible to that which charms the others, and that which enters deep into the one, scarcely raises the Skin of t'other. We must therefore draw Men from this Mistake: They fancy they can partake, and as it were, divide themselves between two sorts of Pleasure, those of Heaven and those of Earth; but 'tis not to be done. The Law puts in the number of unclean Beasts, all such as swim and fly, and live amphibious in two Elements of Earth and Water. 'Tis the Emblem of Worldlings. They swim continually in the Pleasures of the Flesh, and sometimes with feeble Efforts try to withdraw, and raise themselves towards Heaven; but it happens to them, as it does to those Fishes whose Flight is no higher, than just to skim the Surface of the Streams with their Wings, and presently fall again into their usual Elements. *Rare and delicious, says S. Bernard, is the Divine Consolation; it is a chaste but jealous Lady, that deserving to be only lov'd, will not bestow her self on him that runneth after Strangers.* 'Tis for this Reason Solomon cries out *Vanity* on all the Pleasures of the World, of which he had, to his cost, made a most sad Experiment; and for this Reason

David does so oft declare, that he desires no other Joys than those of possessing God. *Leave all, said St. Austin, and thou shalt find all; for every thing is to be found in God, by him that for the sake of God despises every thing.* This is therefore one of the best Advices one can give to those good Souls that would dispose themselves to a devout Life. Renounce then, oh thou Soul that wouldst be good, renounce the Pleasures of this World, and chuse the spiritual ones: Let reading of good Things delight thee more than the most sensual Joys do the most worldly-minded. Let the holy Assemblies and the Preaching of the Word divert thee, as the rest are diverted at their criminal Spectacles: Let Works of Mercy towards the Poor and Needy, be as sweet to thee as their vain Courses, Sports, and idle Conversations are to them; and if thou dost at any Time relax, let Honesty and rigid Virtue be the Directors, and the Measures of thy Pleasures.

### MEDITATION.

*Unhappy is it for thee, O my Soul, that thou wert born in Egypt, and art not sensible of the pleasures of true Canaan! therefore thou turnest thy Eyes so often on the World, and at the same Time that thou shouldst have thy Heart wholly in Heaven at the hour of Prayers, thou thinkest on the Delicacies of spiritual Egypt, that thou feddest on, when thou wast yet a slave of Hell. Thou hast not yet*

yet tasted the pleasures of devout and pious Souls, that say, I am satisfied as it were with Marrow and Fatness: I have tasted of the Goodness of the Lord; his Love is pleasanter than Wine, and sweeter than the Honey-comb; let him kiss me with the kisses of his Mouth: Oh would to God I had been honour'd with those secret Commences, with which my Saviour honours some great privileged Souls, that fill them with Joy amidst their Pains, and makes them sing in Prisons and in Fetters. Learn then, my Soul, learn then to seek thy pleasures and delights in God: He is the Spring of Joys, and all that comes not from him, ends in grief and sadness, in tears, despairs, and gnashings of Teeth. What dost thou wish for, oh my Heart? What dost thou hunger and thirst after? Dost thou love Beauty? God will give it thee, and thou shalt find it in him; by conversing with him, thou shalt become glorious and full of light. Dost thou love Life and Health? He is the Spring of Life, and in his Light shall we see Light; and he will give thee Life that shall be always healthy, always vigorous, and that is Life Eternal. Dost thou love Pleasures? He will make thee drink Rivers of Pleasures, and make thee glad with Wine prepar'd by the Divine Wisdom, that saith, I have mixed my Wines, I have slain my Fatlings. He will cause thee to see Objects that will ravish thee; and make thee hear such sweet and charming Musick as the Consort of the Saints and Angels needs must make, when they are chanting out the Praises of the Eternal God. And canst thou then be sensible of the vain Pleasures of this World, after thou hast received,



ceiv'd, or dost at least in hopes possess, such charming Joys and Pleasures?

## P R A Y E R.

O God, my God, Divine Saviour, come thou and fill my Soul with those sweet Joys thou dost communicate unto thy faithful servants. Give me the Bread that came from Heaven, the true Manna, and the food of Angels; make me once taste those pleasures, that extinguish quite all sense of others of this World, and take from me the relish of its diversions. Let thy sabbaths be my delight, and let thy word be sweeter than the Honey and the Honey-comb. Let Meditation on the good things thou preparest in Heaven for those that love thee, enchant me in such manner, that I may quite despise the world, and give my self entirely to thy service. Cause thou the Heavens to bow and come down to the earth in favour of me; enlarge my Heart, and make a little Paradise therein, and spread abroad such an abundance of the light of thy Grace, that it may come near the light of thy Glory. Cause thou thy streams to flow across this Paradise; plant there the Tree of Life, and pour down such an affluence of good Things, that I may look upon, with the greatest contempt imaginable, the joys and riches of this earth; and being seated on the  
Throne

Throne where thou hast plac'd my soul, she  
may consider all the Palaces on earth, as so  
many wretched huts and dispicable cabins.

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#### C H A P. IV.

*Of the Cares and Perplexities of this  
World, a fourth Source of Indevotion.*

**A**Nother Branch of the Love of the World,  
and a new Obstacle to Devotion, is, the  
Cares and Perplexities of the World. Black  
and dismal Spirits, that frequently withdraw  
us from the Company of our Saviour Christ,  
to lead us amongst the Tombs, and walk us in  
the Ruins of our Fortune and our Greatness.  
There are in the World more miserable than  
happy People, so that this Temptation is at  
least as common as the foregoing one. We  
love this World exceedingly, and therefore  
when we lose it, heartily bewail our Loss. A  
Man whom contrary Winds have driven from  
his desired Haven, can't chuse but turn his  
Eyes that Way, and loses not the Sight of it  
without an inconceivable deal of Trouble. If  
he would lay himself to rest, the Image of his  
Country, Wife and Children, and his Friends,  
return incessantly upon his Mind, and continue  
on his Grief and Pain. So an afflicted Soul  
that

that would retire into it self, and unite with God, sees in the midst of his Devotions the Images of his Misfortunes, that awake his Grievs, and draw him down from Heaven, to plunge him in the bottomless Abyss. These are the Wasps and Gnats, whose Stings are sharp and piercing. While we are fixt to any good Work, and give our whole Attention to it, then come these Insects, and pierce so to the quick, that a Man cannot forbear to put out his Hand. These are the Rods with which the *Egyptian* Task-masters make us make haste to the Works of the Flesh, that Brick-making. These Task-masters are the Spirits that say as *Pharaoh* said, This People is lazy, and since they will needs serve God, double their Labours on them? and then they rouse those sharp and piercing Cares, awakening in one Man the Memory of a Suit at Law he lost, and in another's Mind the sad Estate of his Affairs, and the Downfal of his Family: In another the threatning of Disgrace, or Death of some beloved Person. And then these Thoughts, like so many sharp Points, hasten the Man to return to his gathering Straw, his wordly Occupations, that quite take off his Mind from God. If then we would repose our selves in God's Bosom, we must drive away these buzzing Creatures from our Ears, and lay these cursed busy Spirits. And as the Spouse says, *Ye Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the Hinds and Roes, that ye stir not, nor awake my Love until he please.* So we must say, Be gone vain carnal Thoughts,  
Cares

Cares of this World, ye piercing Cares; be gone ye cursed Spirits, return to your Abyſs, and leave my Soul at reſt, diſturb and trouble not my holy Converſations; withdraw me not from my beloved's Arms, in whoſe ſweet Company is all my Joy and Happineſs.

There are good Remedies againſt this Temptation, if we will but make uſe of them: The firſt is, to rid one's ſelf of the Love of this World; If we love it no more, we ſhould be ſenſible no more of the Miſfortunes that happen to us from it. Let us leave loving Money, and ſee whether Riches, Honours, or the Loſs of them, can touch us. Let us but ſet our Hearts on God, and we ſhall always be content, for we can never loſe him. The World makes us pay Intereſt for its Pleaſures; the Grief it cauſes, when it leaves us is greater far than the Pleaſure we found in its Poſſeſſion; and therefore we muſt leave it in good Time, that we may loſe it quite without much Trouble. If we have any reaſonable and lawful Concerns, and which we cannot rid our ſelves of, let us follow *David's* Counſel, *Commit thy care unto the Lord, and he ſhall bring it to paſs*. We want not Examples to ſupport this Confidence and Truſt: We can produce an *Elias* in the Wilderneſs, whom the Ravens fed; a Prophet in the Lion's-Den, whom thoſe wild Creatures had Reſpect to: The *Iſraelites* in barren and uninhabited Countries, on whom the Heavens rain'd down Bread. Have we need of Assurance? See then the Promise



Promise of our Lord; *The Sparrows fall not to the ground without your heavenly Father; the very hairs of your head are numbered, ye are of more value than many Sparrows; the fowls of the air have neither barns nor granaries, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.* Will God that hears the Ravens crying, forsake you? Sure we must have a mighty Share of Unbelief, to distrust so great and many Promises. And after all this, let us remember that our Concern and Cares change nothing in the State of our Affairs; but only overturn our Souls as it were, and make them incapable of Devotion. Therefore our Lord would have us take no Care, even for to Morrow, for fear it should disturb the Devotion of this present Day. When therefore we enter into our Closet, we must say to our selves, why dost thou trouble thy self about so many Things, when it may be thou shalt die to Morrow? Thou art afraid to want Necessaries, but little thinkest that these Necessaries are but very few. Thou hast had some Losses already, and art afraid of more; but this is it, that God is retrenching thy Superfluities. After all this, how canst thou fear to want, when thou art just a going to find thy God, to whom all Things belong? Say with *S. Austin*, *Throw thy self, my Soul, into the arms of God, and do not fear that he will suffer thee to fall, for his arm supports both Heaven and Earth.* And when thou hast thus said, shut fast thy Door, and put these Cares and

and Trouble under thy Feet, and fall upon thy Knees.

## M E D I T A T I O N.

*Alas! I have great reason to lament; Oh that my head were a fountain, and mine eyes two streams of tears, to bewail my sins withal; the sorrow I should have is a godly sorrow that worketh repentance not to be repented of: But I alas have none at all. My eyes are dry and unrelenting as a rock. Moses his rod must strike me, and the terror of God's judgments must seize me, ere I can break forth into floods. But yet I want not tears to grieve for my Disgraces, and what the world calls misfortunes. I am not at all sparing of tears, but I bestow them ill. Why art thou so troubled, O my soul, at the loss of those things of which thou art but to have the use, and from which death will undoubtedly hurry thee away? Dost thou not know the world and fortune are of glass? They shine, but they are very brittle, a little blow breaks them, and makes them fly to pieces: Why shouldst thou find it strange then, if this Glass should break between thy hands? Why art thou then so sensible of injuries and wrongs? And why dost thou make another's malice and malignity thy misfortune? Why dost thou then bewail so bitterly the loss of those whom death deprives thee of? They were not thine, but God's, who lent them thee, and takes them now again? And why art thou so prodigal of tears, from which thou canst reap so little fruit? This is to employ one's labour for that which nourish-*  
eth

eth not. When thou bewailest thy misfortunes, thy tears do not make those misfortunes end; but bewail thy sins, and they will be thereby destroy'd; they will make a stream, that will carry them away, and they shall be no more. Thy carnal cares and perplexities trouble thy Devotion, but the grief thou shalt shew for thy sins and infirmities, will increase thy piety, and God shall comfort thee.

## P R A Y E R.

Defend then, O thou spirit of consolation, that hast been promis'd from the Father by the Son. Come sweeten thou my bitterness of soul; come recompence me for my losses by thy riches: come render me those joys that pass all Understanding: come give me Piety, that I may have content of mind, that one and the other join'd together may be to me great gain, and make my sovereign happiness: come set my soul in so firm a station, that it cannot be shaken by the rudest shocks: come give me all that I have lost, my goods, possessions, houses, husband, wife, my children, father, mother, kinsfolks, and dear friends: Give me my self, and thou wilt give me all that was taken from me. Come, O my Saviour, let me perfectly possess thee, that thou mayst be to me instead of every thing besides. The world hath taken from me all it gave

gave, but cannot rob me of thy presence. I make thee here an offering of all I have, and all I have not; if I have not lost them for thy Name's sake, yet at least I suffer patiently their absence in compliance to that resignation and obedience that I owe thee. Therefore I hope thou wilt reward me, as though I had lost them for thy sake. And in this hope I banish hence all cares, that they may trouble my repose no longer. O my God, grant that the walls of this my closet may be impenetrable ramparts against the darts of my pursuing enemies: So that I may be in thy presence, as in a peaceable and quiet haven, freed from the storms and tempests, that disturb and drive me up and down; and that the commerce of my soul with thee, may not be broken off by the remembrance of my misfortunes: Oh make me quite forget the evils and the sorrows I have suffered.



## C H A P. V.

*Exceeding Multiplicity of Affairs, a  
fifth Source of Indevotion.*

**T**HIS is another Branch of the Love of the World, and another Hindrance of Devotion. We love the World and give our selves entirely to its Affairs. One is employed in Merchandise, and thinks of nothing else: Another's busied in another's Business, and makes it his own for Interest; he pleads, as is said, in the behalf of Justice, but it is often in behalf of Sin, and whilst he gains his Cause, loses his Conscience. The Physician visits his Patients, with design to make them pay dear for his Service. A Man of Business is always casting up his Accounts. The Artisan exercises his Art; the labouring Husbandman his Tillage. And thus the better Part of all Mens Time is spent, and the World is so corrupt, that we think these Men deserve Commendation for their Diligence, because it is one of the most innocent Ways of losing Time; but for all that, 'tis criminal when it steals our Hearts from God, and relaxes our Devotion. The Mind of Man is so contriv'd and made, that it cannot vigorously tend to more Things than one,

or

or earnestly desire them. So that if a Man bends the Ardor of his Desires, and the Strength of his Inclinations, towards his Family and Trade, God, for his Share, will have but the reliicks of the Soul, and faint and languishing Desires.

I pretend not that Persons of all Conditions should give up themselves entirely to Contemplation. That kind of Life is proper only to the Angels, and not to Men. And since one half of us is Body, we must think to live a Life that is partly bodily. A Bird, be it never so strong, yet cannot always be upon the Wing; nor has a Soul sufficient Force to be continually soaring towards Heaven. I know moreover, we must serve the Necessities of Nature: In a Word, I oppose not my self to that Decree, that Man receiv'd from God, to eat his Bread in the Sweat of his Brows, and labour six Days in a Week. I only would desire, that *Martha's* Business might not hinder *Mary's*, nor that the Body which is our least Part should carry away the best and greatest Portion of our Time. If we have any thing wherein to praise God's gracious Condescension to us, 'tis on this Occasion. All our Time is his, but he gives us six Parts in seven: *Six Days shalt thou labour, but the seventh Day is the Sabbath.* And since he is so bountiful, we ought to be exact, in paying back to him this Tithe of Time, one Day in seven, and one Hour in seven; six Hours should not pass without returning to our God,

to offer him the Seventh. If you do more, you will not do too much, since 'tis to him we owe it all.

Why should you not observe the same Measures, in respect to the Soul, as ye do to the Body? You give that Rest and its Repasts, and break off the most important Affairs you have, to repair its lost Spirits and Strength. Take heed the Spirits of Grace be not too far spent. Recal the Soul to its Exercises of Devotion, as to Repasts, to make it strong and vigorous; and as to Sleep, during which it is gently laid in God's Arms, and fill'd with blest Ideas, and with pleasing Visions. We must, I say, oft labour for this heavenly Recollection, and withdraw the Soul from the wandring Courses it is taking over humane Things.

The running-hasty Banquets are attended with Indigestions, and nourish little or none at all; and therefore we sit down and rest at Meals: And can a Man then think to serve God whilst he is doing somewhat else? These turbulent Devotions are the evil Banquets that oppress and overcharge the Soul, rather than give it any Nourishment or Strength. We must therefore take off our selves in due Time from our ordinary Affairs, that our Souls may retire into themselves as to a Port, there to enjoy a Calm after a Storm. Whilst the Water is in Motion, it can neither well receive nor reflect the Image of the Sun. So a Soul in continual Agitation, cannot well

well receive the Impressions of Grace, the Rays of Jesus Christ who is the Son of Righteousness, nor the Image of the great God. Thou troubled Sea, impetuous Soul, keep thyself still, stop thy Waters, that they may be Heaven's Mirrour, that all its Lights may penetrate, and be drawn out on thee. *How can the knowledge of God, saith S. Basil, enter into a Soul that is already taken up with a croud of carnal thoughts?* One must be Master of himself and Time, to give one's self to God. Pharaoh well understood this Thing, when he said to the Israelites, that which you say, *Come let us go and serve our God*, proceeds from hence, that you have nothing else to do.

God, I avow, loves not the slothful: and how should he love an idle Life, when he will punish every idle Word? But neither does he love those, that are too much busied. Martha, Martha, *thou art cumber'd about many things, but Mary hath chosen the better part*: She was not busied about evil Things, but about too many: She did a good Work even in what she then did: She serv'd our Saviour, and prepar'd him Meat and Drink. If there could be Excess in those innocent and charitable Occupations, that hinder Men from coming oftner to their Lord, what shall we think of the Business of this World at large? How many Persons must there be excluded from the sacred Festival of our Lord, and from his Marriage-Feast, and of what sort? They shall be those that are busied; the one in buying and



and proving a Yoke of Oxen, the other in purchasing and visiting his House, and a third in marrying of a Wife. These Men shall find the Door shut; they found not time to come, when it was seasonable, and when they find their own Time, there shall no Time be found to open the Gate unto them. They shall hear these Words as well as all the rest, *Be gone ye workers of nothing, I know you not.* Let us not then say, To Day I must go to such a Place, to Morrow I must do this and t'other Thing, and after I will think on God. Ah my Soul, thy great Affair is to set thy self aright with God, and often to consult how he is disposed towards thee, to solicit his Clemency, and implore the Succours of his Grace; to pay thy just Homage, and bring him into thy Interests. This is the one, the necessary Thing: Chuse then this good Part, that shall not be taken from thee. *This one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the mark.* Phil. 3. 3.

Let not the indevout ones then object the multiplicity of Business. They that are most busied, can steal Time, to give to their Pleasures, and therefore may take as much at least, to do their Duty in. Let them not object the Goodness and the Innocence of these Employes; that cannot certainly be innocent, that keeps us back from God, and makes us blameable before him.

But

But what shall we say of those that make a Business of adjusting, or dressing the Head exactly, and setting all Things in great Order; that consult their Glass an hundred Times, that nothing be misplac'd, and spend the best Part of their Lives in these vain idle Businesses, and that of all their Hours can hardly spare a few to give to their Devotion? I say, they have a sad Account to give of all; of the Time they have so miserably thrown away; of the Beauty of which they made so bad Use; of the unjust Division made between God and their Idol; since they have employed all their Lives in serving that, and given to God but some few Moments, of a precipitate and flurr'd Devotion.

## M E D I T A T I O N .

Poor Soul, how unhappy art thou, to be oblig'd to serve perpetually, a body that renders nought but evil to thee, for all the good thou dost to it! Thou labourest after abundance of things, and runnest from one end of the World to the other: Thou ventur'est all the tempests of the Sea, and expos'est thy self to its fury: Thy body is burnt by the scorplings of the Sun: Thou pass'est from the icy Climates to the Torrid Zone: Thou rowest on the jaws of the deep whole years together, to seek for riches, Gold and Silver, Pearls, and other fine things: If not this, thou dost something else as good, and takest as much pains to as little purpose, and all for a body that is but dust, and must to dust return again.

again. 'Tis true, it is a burthen God hath laid upon thee, to take care of thy body, but thou dost infinitely increase that weight. The body would content it self with little, if thou wouldst serve it, as it should be served; and consequently it would take thee but a little time, whereas thou givest it all. What blindness and what madness is it? What will be the return of all these pains? The body for which thou takest them all, will not preserve the Riches thou hast gathered up, no, nor no more of them, than one poor winding-sheet, a coffin, and about six foot of ground. O my Soul! 'tis on thy self thou shouldst bestow thy thoughts and pains. Thou art a Queen, and art become a slave: Thou shouldst be serv'd, and thou thy self dost vilely serve another. Thou neglectest to heap up true riches, and therefore thou art poor and blind and naked. I advise thee therefore to purchase gold, and food and raiment of him, who says, Ho, all that thirst, come to the waters, come and buy wine and milk without money.

### P R A Y E R.

O my God, make me to understand thou art the sovereign Good, the only God, the only One that's worth the seeking for; the only One that's worthy to be lov'd; that I may run no longer after these vain shadows of glory and of greatness. Make me to know what are the true goods, that I may give them all my love, and all my care; and may no longer make my appli-

application to the business of this world my greatest vertue. That I may use my body as a slave that is inclined to rebel, but may serve thee, as a Lord, whose inclinations are perpetually favourable to me; that I may seek first thy Kingdom and its righteousness, that all the rest may be added thereto. Let not my soul be unthankful or distrustful, or ever come to doubt his goodness who hath given so many tokens of his love and tenderness. How can it fear that thou shouldst let it want any thing, who furnishest the Ravens when they cry, and the young Lions take their rest and lay them down within their dens. Alas, it labours for the things of this Life, as though 'twould last for ever, and neglects the t'other life, as though 'twould never come. Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief. Make me to understand the truth and excellence of everlasting Life, to the end I may neglect the present one; that I may make such friends, as may receive me into everlasting Habitations, and may acquire such riches as I may carry hence, along with me, and may make choice of that good part, that shall not be taken from me.



## C H A P. VI.

*The sixth Source of Indevotion, the Custom of letting the Mind stray on different Objects.*

**I** Think this is another Source of Indevotion, and especially of our Distractions. We cannot fix our Hearts whilst we are at Prayer, and our Attention is lost: From whence comes this? 'Tis from an evil Custom we have got, of giving liberty to our Imaginations; 'tis that in Men, which Quicksilver is in other Metals: It rolls, and flows, and a little Fire makes it evaporate and vanish away, as it were, in Smoak, it becomes at last so subtle. We permit it to do what it will, and it flies from East to West, from North to South, and from Heaven to Earth; and as though the bounds of the Universe were too little for it, it flies beyond, and loses it self in imaginary Spaces. It cannot shut it self within the bounds of Time, but passes on to Eternity, enquiring what is done there, and what was doing, whilst there was nothing done. If it contains it self within the Universe in this wide Space, it flutters over every Thing, and glides upon their Surfaces, but dives into nothing to the bottom. And as if the Creatures that are in being, were not enough to take it up, it fancies

cies new ones, and imagines Fantoms and Chimera's: It makes Mountains of Gold, Worlds in the Moon, Centaures, and Hippogryphs; and those Movements are commonly so quick, that in less than a quarter of an Hour of this Visionary wandring, we are gone so far, that the ablest Man in the World, though he know our last Thought, shall never be able to divine what was our first. And after this, shall we ask whence come these wandrings of our Thoughts in the exercises of Devotion? How can we think, a Soul accustomed to wander thus, should fix and stop all on the sudden? 'Tis a Horse that never yet receiv'd the Bit, and hath done nothing hitherto but run, and leaped about in the Meadows, Day and Night, when you would put the Saddle on his Back, and the Bridle in his Mouth, he breaks away and throws his Rider, and returns from whence he came. When we would recollect our Soul, it scatters like a Flame abroad; it leaves us quite, and breaks the Bridle or Restraint of Piety, and before we perceive its first escapes, we find our selves plung'd deep in the diversity of vain Thoughts. St. Austin well discovered, what was the Cause of our Distractions. Then, saith he, *when our Mind is fill'd with Fantomes, and carries with it an infinite company of vain Thoughts, it comes to pass that our Prayers are troubled and interrupted; and that being in thy Presence, O God, we try to make thee hear the Voice of our Heart, and although it be an Action of such importance, yet 'tis travers'd and*

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cross'd

cross'd by some vain Image, that comes I know not whence, to cast it self into my Mind, and to disturb it with the rest.

If we have well understood the Nature of the Evil, we shall easily conceive the Remedy; Evils must be cur'd by their contraries. Let us learn to set bounds to our Imaginations; let us not suffer them to roam so far, that we may bring them back with the less difficulty; that is, to dispose our Hearts to Devotion, we must accustom our Minds to meditate on few, but good Things. 'Tis a Mercury that must fix, by applying to it Gold and Silver; a lively Faculty, to which we must apply both Reins and Bridle. But let us not think the Secret of curing this Distemper of the Soul, is to retain our Mind in the privation of all Thoughts; this is not possible to Nature, nor profitable to Grace. The imagination of Man is too active; it is impossible to hold it doing nothing; 'tis to kill it, this, to keep it without Employ; for Action is its very Life: God hath not given us Faculties so noble, to bury them in shameful idleness. And after all, if the Mind were habituated to think on nothing, we should at least have as much trouble to fasten it on the works of Piety, as now we have to reclaim it from its Wandrings and Vagaries.

From all this I conclude, that the Occupations of the wise and understanding Men of the World are, it may be, more destructive of Devotion than any in the World besides. The Eye is never weary of seeing, nor the Ear of hearing;

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hearing ; and we are so far from reckoning these for Faults, that they pass for great Vertues.

Under protection of the glorious Names of Sciences, good Learning, curious Searches, sublime Speculations, Experiments, and wondrous Discoveries, we establish and set up in the World a Method of dividing the Soul with a distraction almost remediless : And would to God, experience did not give us abundance of proofs of this Truth. 'Tis certain and well known, the Atheists are not of the Ignorant, or Vulgar. The *Epicurus's*, *Protagoras's* and *Diagoras's*, have still been learned Men, and great Wits ; the Thing is passed into a Proverb. They say, That those who because of their Profession, are obliged to study Nature very much, and second Causes, apply themselves so strongly to them, that they quite forget to ascend to the first. These Gentlemen so knowing in Antiquity, and that make such a Figure in the Empire of Learning for their understanding, make no great shew of Devotion in the Church. 'Tis the study of holy Things that only can inspire a habit of Devotion. We see but too often, great Divines continue bad Christians, because they intend not their Labours to the Glory of God. They take pains only for themselves, and aim alone at their own Glory. I would never then advise the Man that would be truly devout, to take upon him many Things, nor burthen his Mind with Conjectures, and his Memory with



*May-be's*, of which that which they call *good Learning* is wholly made up. Besides that, this false Science begets a habitude of Pride, the Enemy of Devotion; it inspires moreover a Spirit of *Pyrrhonism* and Doubt, that from Philosophy passes to Divinity: Because they find little or nothing certain in human Sciences, they take the same liberty to doubt of Divine Revelations; they accustom themselves to judge according to the light of Reason, condemning every Thing that does not agree thereto; and are rash enough to introduce into the Church, that Principle they should have left behind them in the Schools.

I design not hereby to be an Advocate for Ignorance, since we are all Citizens of this World, it is permitted us to enquire into what is done there. But the Author of Nature, whose side we take, hath shewn us with what reserve we ought to set our selves to the discovery of his Secrets. He hath let us see but the Effects, and hath hidden almost all the Causes; which teaches us, that we may easily be without their Knowledge, since hidden Things are not for us. I don't know if a little Ignorance would not serve better to the glory of our Creator: If we understood but Nature as well as we would understand it, it might be, we should less admire its Author, for Wonder is, as is said in these Cases, the Daughter of Ignorance. And it is certain, we are wont to admire Things excellent the less,  
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the more we see them ; and the more we think we understand them.

The desire of Knowledge deceives us, but let us take good heed of its Surprizes ; the desire of knowing Good and Evil, as Gods, cost our first Parents too too dear. Whilst they were good, they knew not they were naked, they got that knowledge, and a great deal of the like, by the loss of their Innocence : The knowledge of God alone should be the Subject of all our Labours, and that's enough to take up our whole Life. *Blessed is he that knoweth thee, and nothing else but thee, saith St. Austin, and wretched is the Man that knoweth all Things in the World, without thee ; but he that knows both thee and all Things else, is happy, not because he knows those other Things, but that among the rest he knoweth thee !* O run not then, my Soul, after these empty Shadows of Science, or if thou runnest, run as after Shadows, not with so much love and application. Apply thy self only to Contemplate upon God ; 'tis an admirable Object, and infinitely greater than all the Creatures put together ; and yet this vast Object will not cause that dissipation and distraction that is inseparable from the Contemplation of the Creatures. He is an infinite, but such a One as recolects himself in one Point ; a Sun that unites his Rays in the bottom of thy Heart, to fill it both with Light and Flame. *Let the devout Soul, saith St. Basil, be as a Mirroir and clear Chrystal Glass, that receives no Image but that of her Divine Spouse. Let her continue wholly fill'd*

with this Image, to the end, that any foreign Things coming there, may find no place to set or shew themselves to our Imaginations. Thou Everlasting Star, said another, Thou Source of all created Lights, penetrate to the bottom of my Heart, with one of thy Rays, that may purify and make me glad, that may enlighten, and quicken my Soul and all its Faculties, to unite them all to thee. If we would do a little Violence to our Minds, and stay them on this one and only Object, we should find the good we seek for, a Remedy to our indevout Distractions: And when we have for some Time stopp'd this light evaporating Spirit, by heavenly Meditations, as by Irons and Chains, it will become more grave, more solid and judicious. It will not fly out so easily; and as now when it flies from us, it lights into its wonted Paths, and falls upon its familiar Ideas; so when once these different Thoughts are become strange to it, by its rare Commerce with them, the Mind will not so easily be carried to them.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

Let others understand the extent of their Spirit, and embrace abundance of Objects at a Time! But shun thou diligently, O my Soul, this fault. Thou hast enough to take thee up, the Contemplation of thy God alone. In vain thou hopest to join the knowledge of the World with that of Heaven; thy Heart is yet too little for that God that is Infinite, and hath no bounds, and if once thou fillest it with  
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the Creature-Images, where wilt thou find a place for that of thy Creator? The Eyes of the Night-bird being accustomed to Darknes, cannot endure the brightness and the lustre of the Sun, and a mind always taken up in Contemplation of Things corporal, cannot sustain the Splendors of that glorious and original Spirit, that is the very Essence of incomprehensive Light.

## P R A Y E R.

O Glorious and invisible Sun, that discoverest not thy Beauties but unto Souls that are purified from the vain Images of the World; clear thou mine Eyes by the purity of thy Rays: chase hence that darkness that hath seiz'd my eyes, and banish from my fancy vain Imaginations, that stop my contemplation on the light of thy Truth alone. I know thee, O my God, because thou hast been pleased to shew thy self unto me, but that which I know, alas, what is it in respect of what thou art, and of what might be known? I see thee darkly, and I form to my self an Idea of thy Essence and thy Majesty, that brings thee infinitely below thy self. I do thee wrong, my God, but otherwise I cannot do. I beg thy pardon; I do not conceive of thee as I ought to do, and 'tis the fault of my Mind as well as of my Heart; cleanse thou mine eyes, that I may look on thee  
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as vigorously and fiercely as the eagle looks upon the Sun. Let the knowledge of thy Beauty charm my Heart and fill me so, that I may conceive a holy disgust for all that men in this World call good Letters, and deep Learning. Let me not stay in this circumference, but let all my views be directed towards thee, the centre and the source, from whence proceeds all that is true and lovely in the world. Let it suffice me to see thee, in whom I shall behold all things besides that can be seen. Let my Soul recollect all her strengths, and set them on this only Object, to penetrate it, if it be but possible. Aid me, O God, in this Design; make thy self visible, and let me enter into the bottom of thy mysteries, and in the secrets of thy divine Wisdom; that I may neglect, as unworthy of me, all other curious Sciences, of which the men of this World make such mighty boasts and clutter.

C H A P.

## C H A P. VII.

*The last Source of Indevotion; the Rarity and Interruption of holy Exercises.*

**I** Acknowledge, the foregoing Obstacles are very strong. The Love of the World, its Pleasures, its Perplexities, its Occupations, and distractions of Mind; these are Evils to which it is hard to find a Remedy; but not so hard if we would take more care and pains about it; for the most evident Cause of our Indevotion, is the rarity and interruption of our holy Exercises; it is certain, that spiritual Pleasures are most opposite to carnal Ones; and 'tis only rarity and difficulty makes them sharp and uneasy; we lose the very taste of Pleasures, in the frequent use of them, and when once they have lost the Grace of Novelty, they have lost their Value. This Beggar yesterday thought himself blest with a little Sum, but to Day he has found a great one, and to Morrow will be sensible no more of his Happiness. Make great Entertainments at a great distance, and the Pleasure will be something, but make them every Day, and the Pleasure of the Feast will end by becoming ordinary. But on the contrary, come often to God, renew your Commerces with him, and that which seemed at first both cold and dull, will

will certainly become at length an Exercise of great delight, you come but seldom, and you quickly lose all Relish. The Reason is not hard to find; it is, that Piety and its Exercises become Labours, because of the criminal dispositions Sin puts us in. Now Labour decreases by a continual Use: The Traveller is very weary at the end of his first Journey, but to Morrow it will be less, and the next Day his Labour will be proportion'd to his Strength, and within a few Weeks will become his Diversion. Let us bring our Souls by violence to God, at first they will follow with great pain, they will think the ways both hard and sharp, but after a little while, the Toil will not be so great, but will change by degrees into Pleasure. Is it not true, that the less we do a Thing, the worse it is done? Vertues are **Habitudes**; and though God gives them us, by infusing them into our Souls; yet he gives them in the same manner. Habits are usually acquired; namely, by divers repeated Actions. As therefore a Man is not a good Soldier, for having been once at War; nor a Painter for having received two or three good Lessons in that Art; no more is Piety acquir'd by some few Acts feebly reiterated, but by long and frequent Exercise. 'Tis a War in which we are to combat with our own Thoughts, and against the hardness of our own Hearts: And if we be repulsed the first and second Charge, we must incessantly return again with fresh Vigour. Indevotion is a Monster we must kill

kill by little and little, since 'tis not to be done at one Blow, nor at one Time. This Day we must gain a step, and to Morrow another; but if we suffer him to take the least Breath, he will quickly recover what he lost: And when we are come just to the conquering him entirely, we must not slacken any Thing of our diligence; for if the rarity of devout Exercises hindred its progress, were it never so far advanced, an interruption or relaxation will quite destroy it. 'Tis hard to compass any Art or Science, but 'tis quickly lost for want of Exercise; especially when we stir against our natural Inclinations, to which, if we yield never so little place, we shall find ourselves ready to take their part, a little after. Our Hearts are bent towards Sin, and especially towards Indevotion: Let it be never so well fortified, or confirmed with the best Habits in the World, one heated and disorder'd Thought, that crosses it, will set it all on fire, and with the flames of Concupiscence, stifle the flames of its Devotion; but if it catches thus the fire of Sin so easily, it is on the other hand, heavy and cold to all Devotion: So that after having with abundance of Art and Labour, and great Toil, rais'd it to heaven-wards, an interruption of a few Days will let it sink again into its old Abyss. And for proof of this, I desire no other Witnesses than the sincerely devout Souls. If some Affairs of the World, and some Impediments, which you call Insurmountable, have estranged you some while  
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from the places of Devotion, and made you lose your Closet-hours ; you are at first uneasy, but you insensibly accustom your selves to it, and when you have a mind to return to your good Practices, and exercise of Prayer, then you can hardly find your selves, and feel an inconceivable sloth and heaviness upon your Hearts. Conscience is like the Stomach, leave giving it any Victuals for a while, and afterwards it will desire none ; stay a little longer, and if you give it any, 'twon't know what to do with it, it can digest no more, it will have lost its natural heat, and all its Forces will be spent, and performing none of its Functions, it will let the Body die. So Conscience loses its habits of Devotion, by leaving off its Operations, and the Soul dies in its Sins. In a word, Devotion is a Vertue that puts in motion all the Powers of the Soul, like the great Wheel of a Watch, it moveth all the rest in going on: without discontinuing, all will go easily ; but if you cease, the Wheels will run down, and all will be heavy and unfit for motion : Continue constantly the exercise of Piety, and the Soul will keep its Dispositions to devout Movements ; interrupt them, and there will be a stoppage in the Soul, that will take away its facility of moving towards Heaven.

These are, I think, very near all the greatest Sources of our Indeversions, and the Indispositions of the Soul, which must be mended and set right, before we can open the way to this excellent

excellent Vertue. We may find a great many others, I make no question, but they will throw us into two general Considerations: Who can doubt, for Example, that the Languors of our Souls come from the weakness of our Faith, our Hope, our Charity? Were we but strongly persuaded, that there is a God above that knoweth all our Thoughts, sees all our Ways, and calls himself the King of Men and Angels, that opens Heaven and Hell: Could we present our selves before him, without the Spirit of Submission and a saving Fear? But alas, we believe in such a feeble manner, that we have great need of God's helping our Unbelief; to be pious, we only want to be Believing, and therefore the Fathers have thought no Advice more useful to keep us from Distractions, than this, to remember our selves *of him*, and call to mind, *to whom* we speak. And can we yet doubt, but that this slowness of Belief comes from the little love we have to God? Were we enflamed with the Divine Love, all our Movements would be made by the impressions of this heavenly Fire. In fine, if the hopes of Glory touch'd our Hearts but never so little, we should not move so slowly towards him, from whom we pretend to receive eternal Happiness. But I know not how we should reckon this amongst the Sources of Indevotion, since this want of Faith, and Hope, and Charity, are Indevotion it self.

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To conclude, we must own, that we find in our selves, certain Indispositions of Mind, very often, of which we cannot tell the Cause. To Day we are all Heat, and to Morrow all Ice: A good Soul presses upon it itself, rouses it self, and thinks on every Thing that can enkindle its Affections, seeks for it self, but finds it not; examines its Conscience to find out its Offences that have disingag'd its Heart from God, and grieved the holy Spirit of Grace. She finds nothing she can accuse her self of, and knows not to what she can attribute this her Coldness. -Whence come these Inequalities? It may be from the changeable nature of Man, that is never long the same. It may be the temperament of Humours in the Body, and disposition of the Air. As the Soul is Prisoner in the Body, and acteth by its Organs, and depends extreamly on the stirring of its several Humours, it is manifest, that Devotion depends in some Measure on these Springs of Blood and Dust, which are so often out of order; it may be that the Devil hath found his Time, and sowed his Tares amongst the good Seed. In fine, it may be, that the Spirit of God, the Author of all good Thoughts, hath for some Season hid himself. This driness of Soul may come from hence, that God hath shut the Sources and the Springs of Waters that rise up to everlasting Life. But be it as it will, this Evil does no little mischief to devout Souls. We can employ no other means to the curing it but Prayers and Tears.

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# MEDITATION.

*I do acknowledge my great Negligence: I take a great deal of pains, to do every Thing well that respects this present Life, and take so little, to do the only and the principal thing for which I ought to labour, that 'tis hard to imagine it. To succeed in my Art, I exercise it frequently; I consult my Masters, I reflect on my Mistakes, to the end I may commit them no more. But, Oh my Soul, thou takest not half this care in the exercises of Devotion: Thou dost them seldom; and commonly without any reflexion at all, and therefore dost them very ill; thou dost them seldom, because thou dost them without pleasure, and thou dost them without any profit, because thou dost them without any zeal or application: Return, my Soul, more frequently, return, and thou shalt find Pleasures and Joys unspeakable, and inconceivable.* •

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PRAYER.



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I.

PRAYER.

## P R A Y E R.

**O** my Lord God, my heavenly Saviour, open thou the fountains of thy Grace, and let those streams flow down to me. Make me sensible of the advantages of possessing thee, and of the pleasures that the enjoyment of thy heavenly goods will bring; that I may not drag my self so seldom, and with so much difficulty, to the Churches where thou speakest unto me, or to the closet where thou sufferest me to meet and entertain thee. Draw me, that I may run after thee; when I design to approach thee by the actions of my Devotion: **O** do not thou withdraw thy self from me. I know I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my Roof. It is not long since that my heart was a Den of thieves, and a rendezvous of cursed spirits; thou hast driven them away by thy celestial Grace; but those uncleanly Guests have left the relicks of impurity behind, that make it an unfit abode for thee, and for thy holiness. But, **O** thou sun of my soul, whose rays cannot be sullied with the impurity of those places where they enter: Pierce thou into my very inwards; carry thy flames within, and kindle in my heart the flames of thy love. If I am sleepy, waken me; if I fall into Negligence, and come to break off my devotions,

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devotions, knock at the dooz of my heart, and if thy word cannot be heard, spare not to rouse me by Afflictions: Break me in pieces, rather than permit me to continue in my natural hardness; thy wounds will never break my head, but will be more sweet than precious balms. Come to my aid, O my Redeemer, that I may accomplish the victory over my infirmities. I am heavy and earthly, make thou me spiritual and light. The movements of grace and devotion, that lift me up on high, are opposite to the movements of nature that drag me downwards. In this dispute I am rent and torn in twain; the corruption of nature has the insolence to oppose it self to thy Grace; and this contest causes the seldomness of my devotions. But, O thou heavenly Spirit, make them easy and agreeable, that I may oftner return to them.





# The Prosecution of the Second Part.

## CHAP. I.

*That Pleasure is a mortal Enemy to Devotion: What are the Sentiments and Maxims of the World, touching the Use of Pleasure and Delights.*



WE have thus examined the Sources of Indevotion; we have tried to compass them; but amongst the rest there is one more lively, more open, and more fruitful in Impurities, and by Consequence a greater Enemy to Piety, and that's the Spirit of the World; and after having thought upon the Matter well, we find the Spirit of the World, is the Love of sensual Pleasure. Experience shews us that this Spirit, is such an Enemy of Devotion, that 'tis impossible to be animated therewith, and be truly devout: This continual Use of sensual Pleasures fixes the

the Soul so strongly to its Matter, that the Heart becomes incapable of Elevation. The closer Union we have with sensible Things, the more our Union with God diminisheth. We must therefore turn our greatest Strength towards that Side, and try to bring our Soul back to our God, and pluck it from that fast Hold it has taken on material Things, that it may apply it self to God, and be wholly taken up with him; and therefore though our too great Sensibility of the Pleasures of this Earth, hath already had its Chapter; amongst the other Sources of Indevotion, we do not think we have said as yet enough on that great Subject. The Monster is too dreadful to be combated with Negligence, and slightly: If we could rid our selves of this, we had done all, but if it still continue Master, we shall attempt in vain to be good *Devouts*. And therefore I design in this Prosecution of the Second Part, to offer such Considerations as may, if it be possible, destroy this mighty Enemy of true Devotion.

It is certain that Man is born for Pleasure, since he is created to be happy, and that Happiness consists in the Possession of Good, and in the Sense of that Possession that causes Pleasure. The sovereign Good of Man consists in possessing of God, and being immediately united to him in a very intimate Manner; and that Pleasure, the Sense of which makes up compleat Happiness, must spring from the intimate Union with the Divinity:  
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This Union is made, by Understanding and by Love; and the Pleasure arises from hence, that God applies to the Soul, whilst he embraces it, the Side of his Goodness, and Beauty, and fills it with his Light, and spreads abroad his Joys and Comforts through it. Sin hath so infeebl'd this Union of the Soul with God, that it no longer tastes these Pleasures. *Your Sins have made a separation betwixt God and you,* Isa. 59. 2. And it hath made as it were a thick Cloud, that hides from our Eyes that Sun, whose benign Rays cause so much Joy in striking through us. The Soul hath preserv'd this Sentiment still, that she is born for Pleasure and Delight; so that when she is disunited from God, and depriv'd of the Pleasure of that Intimacy, she turns her wholly to the Body's side, and the closer she is united to it and Pleasures, the farther she is from God: So 'tis the Pleasure of the Senses that disunites the Soul from God: as this disunion is properly that Indevotion which we fight and strive against; for most assuredly Devotion is the Movement of the Soul, by which it returns to its Principle, and to the Enjoyment of those Pleasures that flow from an Union with God. Let the Men of this World take but the Pains to consult their Hearts hereon, and they will tell them, what we have said is very true; they will find the Reason why they could not dispose themselves to Prayer, to love and serve God, was, because they were possessed by their Passions, and enchanted

chanted by the illusions of Sense; that is to say, they are absolutely turn'd to worldly Pleasures side, and are wholly taken up by them. The Soul is straightned, the Mind is bounded when it is filled with the World and its Vanities; and we must not wonder, if God, who will have the Soul entire, find no Place therein.

In a Word, we shall undertake a very difficult Task to persuade those that will become truly devout, that they ought to renounce the Pleasures of the World. Though the Corruption be exceeding great, yet we may not place all Pleasures in the same Rank of Evil; we distinguish two Sorts of sensual Pleasures: There are some we call Excesses, Enormities, and Crimes; the World, 'tis true, gives it self up to these, but dare not however undertake the Defence of them. Others there are which we call innocent Delights, such as Dancing, Play, good Chear, great Entertainments, Feasting, Theatres, Shows, and disorderly Conversations, Commerces of Gallantry, and such Intrigues, as are the ready ways to the last Impurities of criminal Affections. The Church distinguishes these Pleasures as well as the World, and both agree that some of them are innocent; but the Church accounts the greatest Part of these Pleasures to be criminal, whose Innocence the World supports and maintains. Pleasure is an Idol to which all the World sacrifices, young and old, Men and Women, great and small, rich and poor,  
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all Ages, Sexes and Conditions love Pleasures. So that if we count up Voices, we shall lose our Cause; the young especially cannot endure that we should take from them the Use of Pleasure, to which they think Youth should be consecrated and devoted: Painters and Poets, that contribute to the corrupting the Mind, represent to us Pleasure, as a young Man or Maid, laid on a Bed of Flowers, and encompass'd with all those Objects from whence the Pleasures of the Body are deriv'd. The Passions, that are all carnal, and have a strict Alliance with the Sense, are boiling hot in Youth: The Flesh, that is vigorous and yet hath received no Mortification, domineers with Insolence. And therefore Youth follows the Agitations and the Transports of their Temperament; the Sentiments of Piety and the Habits of Vertue are not to be look'd for there, so that Reason destitute of those Helps is easily vanquished by the Passions. Nay, one may say that Reason conspires with the Passions in that Age, and serves but to throw them into greater Excesses. They reason in their Manner, they persuade themselves that Wisdom is not so becoming Youth, but is rather the Lot of those that are growing old; and they abuse that Saying of the Wiseman; *There is a time for every business under Heaven.* If some of them are otherwise inclin'd, they are afraid to follow those better Motions, they are struck with a criminal Kind of Shame, and are loth to be remarkable for their Singularity. They

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They throw themselves into the Crowd, and are carried away by the Stream; and even those that are called the wise Ones of the World, if they dare not authorize these Disorders, they at least excuse them. They are young, say they, they will return again, we must indulge something to Age; one is not born wise, we have been as they are, and they will one Day be, as we are now.

But alas, we do not stop here, we renounce not to Pleasure, when we are past our Youth, the Love of that is a Distemper that we carry with us in all Ages, we yield as late as we possibly can; or, to say truth, never. Age and Distempers sometimes fasten Men to Pleasures, but very seldom make them give them over; this is the hardest and the rarest thing imaginable. How often do we see Women that are resolv'd to hold out against Time, and that catch hold of every thing they can light on, not to be carried away by the Stream; they omit no manner of Way to conserve the Air of Youth; they would deceive Men, and it may be they think of deceiving Death too. They would always be the Object of the Love of this World, that they may have their Shares of its Pleasures, and when Age is come and hath spread its Marks upon their Hew, they draw a Curtain over it to render the Defects invisible. You may see them Idolatresses of the World, burying their Heads under a Heap of Powder, to mingle and confound the Whiteness of  
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their Gray, with the white of their Powders; they fill up the Hollowness of their Face; and shadow the Wrinkles of their Brows with Curls and Ribbands, Nets and Points; that which do the best, is that they Embalm their Bodies, and cover them with Sweets, to hinder the ugly Smells that might arise from their just living Carcasses; and in this Dress they mix with all Company, and will be Parties concern'd in every merry Meeting. We see them at Balls, and at the Play-houses, trembling with Weakness; though they have not Sight enough to distinguish red from black, nor a Cater from a Deuce, yet they must play at Cards and Dice, although it be with Spectacles. In a Word, after they have been the Idols of the World, they chastise the Faults they made it commit, they become its Punishment, and are its Abomination. They are Spectres and Fantoms that pursue and scare it, and it flees them, and has them in Abhorrence.

But are the Men ever the wiser? Do we not see too among them, old Sinners, perfectly worn out with Debauchery, but yet whose Lusts and Desires are young and boiling? Their Inclinations are continually Vicious, though their Bodies will obey them no longer in being the Ministers of their polluted Pleasures. Methinks, in considering them, I see with my self, what happens after the burning of a House; when the main Fire hath ceased, we see a great while after, Sparks and  
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little Flames pierce through the Heaps of Rubbish ; this lets us see the Fire is still alive, and only wants more Matter ; and so it is with these old Men, they are but a Heap of warm Ashes, and the Reliques of a Fire, but in the midst of these Ashes we see from time to time, Efforts of vile Concupiscence are made, that let us see, the Love of Pleasure still lives within, and that the Body only wants its Strength to put those impotent Desires in Act.

All Men then are on Pleasures Side ; and they are not content to defend it by Plurality of Votes, but would maintain it by Arguments of Reason. They tell us, God and Nature do nothing in vain, the Earth is covered with Creatures, the Sea is filled with Fish, the Air with Fowls, and the whole World with Pleasures. Is it possible for God, who made them for our Service, to forbid us the Use of them ? Hath the Author of Nature done so many sensible Wonders, to fill the Senses with Illusions, and excite in them criminal Affections ? Hath God inscribed on every Creature, *Touch it not* ? At this Rate, the Condition of a Man is exceedingly miserable : When he was in Paradise, there was but one Tree that was forbidden him to taste, and now are all Things in the World become as so many mortal and forbidden Fruits, that we must not touch but die the Death ? How suits it with the Wisdom and the Goodness of God to place Man amidst so many Tentations, if he cannot fall into any one without Sin ? Is



there not a natural Bond and Tie betwixt Love and Beauty, betwixt Desires and Things desirable? And why should God have made so many Things so lovely and so good, if he design'd to forbid Men their Enjoyment or desiring them? Alas, there are too many Evils unavoidable, why should we search for others, that we cannot shun? And if the good Things of this World are not the Rewards of good and happy Men, they are at least the Consolations of the Miserable, as says *S. Austin*. Why should we not enjoy these Delights that are the Sweetnings and the Solaces of all their Pains? Take away Joy, you take away their Life: What, would you bury Men alive? Is not this to make this Life a sad and melancholy Night? In a Word, do you not make poor Man the miserablest Creature in the World? Religion is not so severe, and stuck with so many Thorns, as we would make believe; if you ascend to its Original, you will find, say they, Religion, much more pure and disingaged from the rigorous Superstition cloathed it withal. The Saints have had their Excesses and have given God thanks for a Table well covered; for a full Bowl and an overflowing Cup. They have said, That Wine was design'd to make glad the heart of Man: Our Lord himself, the Author of the true Religion, hath had his Feastings, and went to the Marriage-Dinner, and there made excellent Wine to give the Guests good Entertainment. 'Tis thus they plead for Pleasure, and the Misfortune

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tune is, these Maxims are not only vented Abroad in the World, but we are trying to bring them into the Church. We have Directors fitted for the Purpose, that deck Religion with Flowers; that cry, *Make strait the paths and smooth the rugged ways*, Enlarge the Road, that all the World may walk therein; they make Devotion easy for us, and are full of, *My yoke is easy, and my burden light*. Love maketh easy our Lord's Yoke, for all is easy, all is sweet to him that loves; but these bad Masters make their Yokes easy by dispensing with the Love of God, and suffering Men to love the World, and follow its Delights. And the Reason why, both in the World and Church there are so very few truly devout, is because there are so very many Lovers and pursuers of Pleasure.

## MEDITATION.

*Wretch that I am! I do not the good I would, but the evil that I would not, that I do. I understand very well the force of the reasons of Religion, that call me to renounce the pleasures of this World, and the weakness of the Pleas of all their Advocates: But all these reasons find the door shut, because my heart is set against them; and those that had reasonings that maintain the use of pleasure enter easily, because they are allied to the corruptions of my heart. My flesh is troubled to find the reasons of Piety so strong, and would be glad that those of pleasure should be better. And my Soul is grieved, when it*

sees the force of Truth, and finds in it self an unwillingness to yield. I seriously bewail my state, that though I see the weakness of the Reasons that sway me on the side of pleasure, yet can I not hinder my self from being carried away by them, as though they were very good and sound ones. For Piety and Reason get nothing by joyning Forces, Passion, Almighty Passion, always is victorious. O my Soul, thou art a fond Idolater of pleasure; 'tis to no purpose for thee to shift places, thou carriest thy Divinities along with thee. If thou renouncest any pleasure, thou dost not quit thy Idolatry, but only changest the object of thy worship. For the love of pleasure finds out ways to be sure to lose nothing, but for one object lost provides thee with another. Judge then of what nature thy Devotions must needs be, when thou dividest them betwixt thy Idols and thy God. O take that part, my Soul, that good part, that shall not be taken from thee; thou canst not serve two Masters, God and the World. It may be thou rejoycest, that thou hast renounc'd the pleasure of thy youth, in that thou lovest no longer Balls and Comedies and Plays: but thou perceivest not, that corruption ties thee to some other objects, and that thou art a slave to thy passions, and the cheat and property of thy own heart. In thy youth thou tookest pleasure to scatter abroad thy Money, but now thou takest delight in keeping it together. What difference is there betwixt these two pleasures? Are they not both pleasures of Sense? Have they not both one Source, to wit, that source of sensible things? Do they not produce the same effect, and separate thee from God? A young Man that gives himself

himself to the excess of youthful Pleasures, should he value himself because he plays not at Cherry-stones and Push-pin, as he did when he was a Boy? Every Age of Life hath its peculiar passions and pleasures, but all in general are Enemies to Devotion. Be not therefore troubled to know what it is that makes thee sleep at Sermons, 'tis the Devil of Pleasure and Delight that rocks thee; when thou ceasest to be attentive at thy Prayers, 'tis he that plucks thee by the Ears, and carries thee astray: And if thou feelest no delight in the presence of God, that unites himself immediately unto thee; it comes from hence, that thou art plung'd and overwhelm'd in Matter, and being entirely in the interest of corporal and carnal things, thou thinkest there is nothing real, but what thou feelest, and knowest of no true joys, but what proceed from things sensible. Re-enter then, my Soul, re-enter then thy self, permit these bodily Objects, no longer to dazzle the Eyes of thy Understanding; seek for the presence of thy God: Hearken to the eternal wisdom that speaks to thee in the secret of thy heart: Resist the attempts which the flesh makes to destroy thee. Believe not the report of thy Senses, take not those for true delights, they offer to thee. Look upon nothing which thou seest, as worthy of thy application and esteem; let God be all in all, and fill thy heart, and take it wholly up. And if thou appliest thy self to him, he will do so to thee; and from this mutual Application, will proceed pleasures so great that thy imagination cannot well conceive them.



## P R A Y E R.

My Lord and my God ; what shall I render to thee for so many Favours, and what shall I do to expiate so many ingratitudees ? Thou hast plac'd me in a paradise where all good things abound ; Thou hast ordain'd me master of all the works of thy hand, and hast given me the use of all I see ; Thou hast made all creatures sensible that they may have some agreement with my senses, and may be as steps to raise me to things intelligible, but by reason of my corruption they are become snares : I make no use of the visible creatures to ascend to things not seen ; but I make use of them to descend below my self ; I immerse my self in matter, and bury my self in bodily things. And so I make my mind a slave to its body. The heaven and earth, the sea and air, are fill'd with objects, that might serve to make me know thee, that I might admire and praise thee, but I use them only to offend thee : All things are full of objects to flatter and please the senses : but, O my God, thou hast not made them with design, that I should there seek for sensual pleasures, and intoxicate my self with joys, and corporeal delights. Thou hast made, by thy profound wisdom, and by thy infinite power, the fishes of the sea, the creatures of the earth, plants and several fruits, with ma-  
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ny'precious, liquors and all for the taste; perfumes for the smell, and beauties for the eyes, sounds for the ears, and several pleasures much for the touch. I am assured, O my God, that thou hast done all this to save, and not destroy me, had I remained innocent, and in the state thou createdst me, I could not thus have abused all thy goods, in using and possessing them: I might then have used them, because this use should not have abased and brought down my mind to sensible things, by dividing me from thee, but I might still have continued perfectly united to thee. But now the Devil hath spread abroad his snares in every creature, and fixed temptations on every object of my sense. Thou seest then, O my God, thou seest me surrounded with tempters on all hands; I cannot open my eyes, nor hearken with my ears, but I perceive some image that awakens my corrupt imagination and foment's my wicked desires. O Son of God, O Holy Ghost, be you the guardians of my heart; let me vanquish these temptations; O favour me so far, as to recall thy creatures to their true and right use, that I may not abuse them: let me know and understand them, that I may wonder at thy power, and praise thy wisdom; that from these corporal images I may draw spiritual ones, and find thee in all thy creatures, and my heart may more and more return to thee, thou infinite, eternal Spirit.

## C H A P. II.

*That the Pleasures of the Sense, neither in their use, nor abuse, agree with the Spirit of Christianity and Devotion.*

**I** Know very well this Maxim. must appear strange to the greatest part of Men; and particularly to those that are prepossess'd with the Opinions we have been examining in the foregoing Chapter. The Maxims of the Church are opposite to those of the World, as Light is to Darknes. The World authorizes all sensual Pleasures, the Church condemns them almost all: We do not therefore simply form our Process against those Debauches, whose Name is odious even in the World; but we condemn even those that are called good and honest Folks, who indeed have some degree of moral Honesty, and whose Lives are free from the severity of the Laws taking hold on them, but who throw away their Lives in the vain Pleasures of this World. All these Pleasures that we think innocent, are Enemies of Devotion, and accord not at all with the Spirit of Christianity, neither in their use, nor their abuse; and if we cannot render this Truth victorious by plurality of Voices, let

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us at least make it evident by the force of Reason.

First, Let us hear our Lord Christ speaking to this Matter; for where can we find the *Spirit of Christianity*, better than in Christ Jesus himself? Hear him then describing the Way that leads to Life. *Wide is the gate and broad the way that leads to Death, and many there are that enter therein; for strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leads to Life. If thou wouldst be perfect, go sell all that thou hast, and follow me. If any one will come after me, let him take up his Cross and follow me. If thine Eye offend thee, or thy right Hand, pluck it out, and cut it off, and cast it behind thee. Blessed are the poor: Blessed are they that hunger and thirst: Blessed are those that mourn, and are persecuted. And have not the Disciples followed their Master herein? Do they not say also, Mortify therefore your members that are on Earth. If any one loveth the World, the love of the Father dwelleth not in him. Be ye sober and watch, and be not ye conformable to this present World. As Strangers and Pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts. Be not partakers of the unfruitful works of darkness. Make not the Temples of the Holy Ghost, the Members of an Harlot. The Spirit of the Prophets differed not from that of the Apostles. Behold, I said of Joy it is madness, and of Laughter it is folly. It is better for a man to go into the house of mourning, than of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to heart. It is good for a man that he bear the Yoke in his youth. I said in mine heart,*



heart, go to now I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure, and behold, this also is Vanity. Rejoice O young man, in the time of thy youth, but know that for all these things God will bring thee to Judgment. And now, in Conscience, are these the Characters of the Christians of our times? These Crosses, Thorns, these hard Ways, these strait Gates, this Yoke, this renouncing of the World, and all its Poms and Vanities, do they signify that we may follow our Lord Jesus Christ, with all our train of Pleasures and Delights; sometimes amidst our Feasts, sometimes at Balls, sometimes at Comedies, sometimes at Plays? These soft effeminate Lives, that are spent at Cards and Dice, in vain and criminal Conversations, in Intrigues of sensual Love; have they any Agreement with the Combats, the Wrestlings, and the Races, from which the holy Spirit borrows Emblems to express the Life of a Christian by? So fight, so run, that ye may obtain, and bear away the Prize. Mortify therefore your flesh, and bring it under subjection. So fight ye, not as beating the Air. Heaven and Earth, Life and Death, are in no greater Opposition than the effeminate Life of Christians, and the pourtrait of their Life drawn by the holy Spirit.

But above all, let us remember often, that the Spirit of Christianity and of Devotion, loves nothing so well as Mortification, to which the pleasures of the Sense are deadly Enemies: Mortify therefore your members that are on Earth, saith St. Paul; and is this the way

way to mortify your Members, by feeding them with Pleasures; by laying them on Beds of Down, by ransacking both Sea and Land to furnish them with delicate Provisions; by joining Art with Nature in commixing precious Liquors, and running after every Thing that may enchant the Senses? Some will say, that by those *Members*, of which the Gospel enjoins the Mortification, we must understand *Vices*; which I grant. But you know very well, that the Members of the Body, are the Origine, and, as it were, the Seat of the Members of the old Man, that are the Vices. And we cannot kill Vice, but by mortifying our Members. The Flesh is that unhappy Ground, accursed of God, that produceth Thorns and Briars; and the more you feed this Ground, the more it will produce these venomous Plants. We are therefore obliged to keep this Ground as barren as we can of Pleasures, that foment our Lusts, and bring forth such abominable Fruits.

The Spirit of Christianity and of Devotion, is a Spirit of Strength, but Pleasure is soft and weak, it loosens the Soul, and effeminates the Courage, and the Church requires a vigorous Soul and a Heart of such a make, as cannot be hurt by the most weighty Blows, or sharpest Swords of the Enemies of it. We have to march between a hundred and a hundred drawn Swords, and he that will follow the Truth of Christ, must resolve to suffer Persecution, because we have always the Devil

vil and the World to cope with. But is a soft voluptuous Life proper, do you think, to dispose one for Martyrdom? When we rise from a Bed of Sweets, from a delicious Table, with our Heads full of the fumes of a Debauch, are we in a condition to go up to the Scaffolds, to enter the Flames, and look on Racks and Tortures without terror? Where would it be most reasonable to seek for the Heroes of Jesus Christ, that can meet Death undaunted; amongst the Christians of our Days, that are drench'd in Pleasures, or amongst those whose rigorous, sharp, retir'd Life, hath openly declared War to all the Pleasures of the World? But we are not call'd, say Men, to Martyrdom, and according to all appearance, never shall. That may be, but 'tis no matter, we must always be in a disposition of suffering Martyrdom, if need were. But besides, do we think that the Swords and Fire of Persecutions, are any ways more dangerous than Temptations? We think we have need of great Strength and Courage, to endure Punishments only. But alas, he that went off victorious from these bloody Combats, hath often fallen into the Devil's Nets: Men that have carried in their Bodies the glorious Marks of the Lord Jesus, have since become the Sons of Wrath, by suffering themselves to be surpriz'd, by the Devil of Pride, of Avarice, Uncleanneſs and Hereſy. He that had rent a Lion in twain by his mighty Strength, and ſlain the *Philiftines* by whole Troops, with the Jaw-bone of an Aſs,

As, fell by the wiles of *Dalila*, and was carried in Chains to the Temple of her Idol. This Truth is not unknown to the World : 'Twas well said, that the Delights of *Capua* did more than the *Roman* Sword, and found the way of softning and of breaking the hard *Africans* that followed *Hannibal*, and carried Victory in Triumph after them. Thus the Tranquillity God gives us, should not make us sleep in the Arms of Pleasure : Prosperity is a powerful Temptation, and Pleasure it self a Monster that we cannot vanquish without a vigorous and brave Resistance. Let us consider farther this great Matter.

The Pleasures of the World, are either of these Sense, or of Imagination. Now these Faculties are Corporeal, and therefore all their Pleasures are Corporeal : And this is enough to say to such as would follow the Spirit of the Gospel, that they cannot lawfully seek after them. For the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, leads Men to the neglecting and despising of the Body, and always speaks of it with a kind of Contempt. According to the style of the Holy Ghost, the Body is but *Dust* and *Ashes*, an *earthly house*, an *house of Clay*, that *Worms shall feed on and destroy*, a *Flower that grows up in the morning, and is cut down at even*, a *stream that passes away*, a *shadow that disappears*, a *dream that vanishes*, a *smoak that is lost whilst it ascends*. And as he speaks with Contempt, so he would have us take as little care of it. Take no care for the Body, saith *St. Paul*, to obey



*it in the lusts thereof : Take no thought for the morrow, says our Lord, for the morrow shall take thought for it self, or for what ye shall eat or drink, or wherewith ye shall be clothed.*

But for the Soul, the Holy Ghost would have us turn all our Cares on that side ; it would have us watch, and be sober, to keep the Soul, because the Devil goeth about like a roaring Lion, seeking whom he may devour. He bids us work out our Salvation with fear and trembling, and would have us in perpetual Care about it. He commands us to feed our Souls with the Milk of Understanding, pure and simple, and furnish them with solid Food. He would have us entertain them with continual Joy : and seek those noble Pleasures that are found in the possession of God, which are proper only to the Soul. The Gospel would have us dress and adorn them, that they may be as a fair Spouse without spot, and fit to be presented to our Lord, the heavenly Bridegroom. Examine but the Conduct of voluptuous Men, how contrary it is to this ; they act as though they were all Flesh ; and as if their Soul were but as so much Salt to keep the Body from corruption ; all the Ideas that they have of Pleasure, come to them from the Sense and Imagination, and they have no more conception of spiritual Joys, than blind Men have of Colours. As therefore they have never tasted any other than corporeal Delights, they believe they are oblig'd to their Bodies for all their Happiness. And in effect

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effect it is so, for at what Time they taste their carnal Pleasures, one cannot say, they are not happy, since Happiness consists in Joys and Pleasures, and which they, for that Moment are in possession of. Thus, because we chiefly love what we consider as the Source of our Felicity, we must not think it strange; if these Men of Pleasure love their Bodies, which they look on as the Sources of their Delights. We see, Men have the same Sentiments of their Bodies, as the Saints have for God, who is their Sovereign Good, and in whom they find their greatest Joy. They worship this Body, they cherish it, perfume it, sacrifice, and offer Incense to it: And if you offer it any Indignity, they are as jealous of it as of their Divinity. Nay, they have greater Indignation at him that hurts this Body, than at him that is a known Blasphemer or a sacrilegious Person. In a word, this Body is so very like their God, that they sacrifice all to it, even to their Consciences; nay, even to God himself. But nothing is more opposite to Christianity and the Spirit of Devotion, than this Sentiment. For the true Christian is obliged to despise his Body, to sacrifice it to his God, to see himself torn to pieces for his Name's sake, and to renounce all sensual Pleasures for his sake.

The Spirit of the Gospel absolutely tends to the contempt of the World, but the Spirit of sensual Pleasure tends to the love of it. How can we chuse but love the World, when

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it careſſes us, when it does us ſo much good, and gives us ſo much pleaſure; ſince we love it when it frowns upon us, when it perſecutes, and fills our Cup with bitterneſs? The World is a great Cheat, and an inexhauſtible ſpring of Illuſions; it masks it ſelf, and ſhews it ſelf before us, under the Image of corporal Delight; it embraces us with a Garment and Crown bedeck'd with Flowers, but then thoſe Flowers have under them a thouſand Prickles. We ſee not indeed theſe Prickles, but the Flowers only; we are only ſenſible of the Pleaſures, and love the Cauſe from whence they ſpring. But all the World knows, nothing is more oppoſite to Devotion, than the love of the World, as we have already let you ſee; and by conſequence there is nothing more oppoſite to the Spirit of Chriſtianity and Devotion, than ſenſual Pleaſure.

The Spirit of the Chriſtian Religion would inſpire a contempt of the preſent Life, and a deſire of that to come. Now it is certain, nothing faſtens us ſo much to this Life, as the pleaſure of the Senſe. The Saints ſtill ſay, and ought to ſay, *I deſire to be diſſolved and to be with Chriſt, for this is much better. I know that when this earthly Tabernacle is diſſolv'd, we have an houſe eternal in the Heavens, and therefore we deſire to be cloathed again with this heavenly Houſe: None of theſe Things move me, nor count I my life dear unto me. As the Hart panteth after the Brooks, ſo longeth my Soul after thee, O God. O when ſhall I appear before the preſence* of

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of God? It is impossible, that Men who live in a perpetual use of Pleasures, should have such Sentiments as these. Every one desires to be happy, and when he is once so, or believes he is so, he cannot renounce that which he looks upon to be the spring of his Happiness. These carnal Men think they are happy, whilst they are enjoying their Delights, and have no other Ideas of Happiness than that which they enjoy in this present Life. They hear a great many talk continually of another Life, and another sort of Happiness; but they have got a Habit of not suffering themselves to be affected by any other Thing than Sense and Imagination, and so because this Life and this Happiness fall not under any Sense, nor can be well imagined, they can consider them no otherwise, than as imaginary Beings, that are nothing in respect of them, because they have no manner of Ideas of them; their Hearts (in a word) because they meet with nothing in this Life but gross Earth, that is to say, abundance of Prosperity, take deep rooting in it. Their Affections intoxicated with the Pleasures of the Flesh, bound themselves with sensible Objects; they desire nothing beyond, because they wish for nothing that they know not of, or have not any clear distinct Ideas of. The Earth is become their Country, here they are naturaliz'd, and all the rest is to them a strange and unknown Region.



Let them therefore say, all that can possibly be said. 'Tis certainly a sad and evil Preparation for Death, this continual Use of Pleasures, whose Innocence the World disputes for and maintains. *O Death, saith the wise Man, how bitter is the remembrance of thee, to him that lives in peace with his good things.* We live much better in a Palace, than a Prison, but 'tis more difficult to die in one, than in the other. How insupportable is the Thought of Death, how terrible its Presence to the Man that lives in Pleasure! He looks upon it as a Judge, that is come to pronounce a sad Arrest, and like an Executioner that seizes on him to lead him to his Punishment. But for the good Christian that has always kept his Body in Subjection, and a Privation of carnal Pleasures; he looks on Death, as on a Messenger that brings him good News, that is coming to break down his Prison-walls, and leave him at Liberty to fly to Heaven. The Voluptuous ones are drag'd to Death, and catch hold of every Thing they meet withal to hinder them from going; they yield indeed at last to Necessity, but they yield with a very ill Grace; those therefore who multiply to themselves sensual Pleasures, do but make themselves Chains whose breaking will cost them many a Flood of Tears. But the Saints who have renounc'd the Pleasures of this World will find no Difficulty in leaving it, since they have already left all that was sweet and charming in it.

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Enemies of Devotion, because they absolutely take away all the Relish of spiritual ones, which the Faithful find in their conversing with God; if I had not already said as much, and if it were not evident by Reason and Experience. We know very well, those People who are Slaves to sensual Pleasures, look upon all that can be said of the Pleasures of Devotion, as so many Fables. Tell them of the Delights that a faithful Soul tastes when God, in secret, is speaking to his Heart of the Sweetness it finds in mediating on the Love he hath for us, or in the Contemplation of his Mysteries; and they think you are telling them of so many Dreams and Visions. 'Tis certain, one is no farther sensible of spiritual Joys, than one has renounc'd to carnal ones. And therefore 'tis we are so little affected with the Delights of Prayer, and Contemplation, because we have so imperfectly renounc'd the Pleasures of the Sense. We must own, that in this Respect the rich and honourable are expos'd to great Temptations, their Condition, as they say, obliges them every Day, to draw after them a Train of Pleasures; if this be so, they are unhappy; and in View of this, our Lord might well say, *How hard is it for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God!* Riches and Honours are continual Temptations to Voluptuousness, and hard it is to be always tempted and never fall: But Temperance and Moderation on the other Hand, are also worthy of great Praises, when they preserve a  
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Man amidst so many Enemies that have conspir'd his Ruin: This is very rare, but therefore Devotion is so too amongst such as think themselves oblig'd by their Degree and Rank to live continually in Pleasures.

In fine, if it is, as certainly it may be, permitted to draw Proofs from Examples, we can easily prove, that the Spirit of Devotion and Christianity are Enemies to sensual Pleasures. Which, do you think, do better understand the Spirit of Christianity; the Christians of our Age, that take such Liberty as strict Morality would call *Libertinism*, or the Christians of the past Ages, that liv'd a very rigorous and austere Life? Abundance have there been, who not finding in the World a Place of Retreat secure enough against the Temptations of Pleasure, have sought one in the Desarts, where they might meet with none but pure and harmless Objects. Others have clad themselves in Hair and Sackcloth; Others have still continued amongst Company, but prefer'd Fasting and Mortification to all the Pleasures of the Sense. Do ye think these Men were wiser than we, or we than they? I know you will not stick at this, but place these Rigours and Austerities amongst the Fruits of Enthusiasm, and Illusions of the Spirit of Error. But sure, this is a rash Judgment from which we appeal to God's Tribunal, to whom alone it belongs of right to distinguish, in austere lives, *Sincerity* from *Hypocrisy*.

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But would we have an Example that is not subject to Mistakes? Let us look then on our Lord Jesus, whose Life had nothing common with the Pleasures of the Sense. You see him born in a Stable, brought up in a Carpenter's House, fasting forty Days in the Wilderness, and living upon the Alms of the Women that followed him. We hear him telling us, *he had not where to lay his head.* We see him going on Foot from Place to Place: Now, in good Earnest, does this savour of the Spirit of the World, and a delicious Life? Who better knows what the Spirit of Christianity should be, than Jesus Christ himself, and what are the Effects of Devotion, than he who was perfectly devoted to his Father? After all this, don't tell me, that our Lord was not an Enemy of Pleasures, because we find him sometimes at Festivals and Marriages: How were it to be wish'd our Saviour were at all our Festivals! One should not see such Madness and Debauchery reign there, but Wisdom, Temperance, Soberness, and the greatest Moderation that can be, would come along with that divine Guest.

## M E D I T A T I O N.

*My Soul, since thou art then encompassed with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, run with patience the Race that is set before thee. Since thou art shewn the way by so many great and holy Examples, thou needs must imitate and follow them. Wouldst thou follow*



follow an Elias in the Desert, a Moses on the Mount, and fasting forty days, and be fed with bread by the Ravens, and drink of the Brook? But these are particular Calls that respect not thee at all; but if any one will follow John the Baptist, be cloath'd in Camels skin, and wear a leathern Girdle, and live on Locusts and wild Honey; Say not of him, because he cometh neither eating nor drinking, he hath a Devil. Take heed of making such a rash judgment: Those that come to exhort Men to Repentance, should preach up Mortification, both by their actions, words, their habits, and their food. Thou hast need, my heart, to mortify and to repent thy self, and therefore 'twould be well thy body were cloath'd in sackcloth and hair. But this Example, thou wilt say, of John the Baptist maketh not a Law, and if God hath not commanded it, thou canst not be oblig'd to it. Take then another Example, another Model, much more perfect, and such as thou shouldst follow, the Example of thy Lord and Saviour, the Pattern in whose steps thou needs must tread. O live like him, and 'twill be well enough: The Disciple must not look to be greater than his Master: He lived in the World, but he was not of the World: He eat and drank to give Examples of Sobriety: He conversed with Men, to teach them to speak soberly and wisely; for he opened not his Mouth, but to teach and edify. He is the model of all that thou shouldst suffer, all that thou shouldst do, and all thou shouldst leave undone. Suffer as he did patiently the scorns and outrages of the World: Drink as he did with the Spirit of Submission the Cup of God's Anger, when he presents it to thee:

thee: Do the good works he did; employ the day in doing good to those that are afflicted, and the night in Prayers: And let thy meat and drink be to do the will of thy Father that is in Heaven: Abstain as he did from the pleasures of the World, lay his Cross upon thee, and mortify sin in the flesh, since thy Saviour mortified his. If any one loves me, said he, let him come after me and follow me. But, O my Soul, how far art thou from him! How imperfect is thy Imitation, and how short dost thou come of thy great Pattern! But lose not Courage; labour, march on, leave all things else behind, and tend to what is before thee! The holy Spirit, sent by thy Saviour, will conduct thee in that hard and difficult way, as in a Country that is at peace and quiet. If thou canst not attain to the perfection of that great Model, which God hath set before thine Eyes, approach at least as near as thou canst, for if thou wouldst be happy as he was, thou must be just and holy as he was, thou must enter in at the strait Gate, and walk in the way of mortification, to arrive at that life of which he is the Author and the Source. The Soul of thy Saviour was not only deprived of all the pleasures of the Sense, but was also pierced through with many Sorrows. To imitate him thou must renounce to all carnal Delights, and submit thy self to the bitter sorrows of Repentance.

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PRAYER.

## P R A Y E R.

O my divine Redeemer, my Jesus, Saviour, and my God, thou wouldest that I should follow thee, and hast said, Learn of me. Thy Apostles have said, Look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of your Faith, be ye Imitators of us as we also are of Jesus. It is but fit, my Saviour, I should follow thee. Thou hast taken upon thee my infirmities, how should I glory then, how should I long to possess thy vertues! But if it be so glorious, 'tis as difficult: I can do all things through him who strengthens me, and can do nothing of my self. O give me then the grace that is necessary to accomplish what thou commandest, and after that, command me what thou wilt. Thou madest thy self like to me, in taking my flesh. O make me like to thee by giving me thy spirit. I am thy image, O God, but a defac'd corrupted image, and on which the Devil hath spread his infamous marks. O cleanse thou me again; pass with the pencil of thy grace over the defaced lines of this thy image: Wash away all the impurities the world hath scattered and left there: If I cannot follow thee, draw me, that I may run after thee: give me, the wings of thy love, that I may fly after thee: give me, O my Lord, the desire to imitate and follow thee, for sure I should if I desir'd it: I will, I will, my God, but 'tis not

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not with a free triumphant will, but with a slavish one. Give me, O Lord, both to will and to do. My flesh findeth the paths thou trodest in both sharp and difficult, and is discourag'd at the sight of them. How cowardly and how unjust is this wretched body! what if thou hadst indispensably commanded us to walk in the ways of thy forerunner John the Baptist: to dwell in the wilderness: to inhabit some poor cave at the foot of a mountain; or the trunk and shade of some old oak; to be clothed with haircloth, to feed ordinarily on locusts, and to make a feast on some wild honey? If thou leddest not this life thy self; it was to spare us, and not set before us a life very hardly imitable. These are but the outsidings of piety, which may be oftentimes cloaks for hypocrisy; but thou hast set us great examples, real, solid, and internal virtues. If thou commandest us not, to wear haircloth, thou wouldst we should be clothed with righteousness and holiness, with bowels of compassion and a contended spirit. If thou sendest us not into the deserts, thou wouldst we should retire into the secrets of our hearts, there to converse with thee, and hear the truths thou wouldst reveal unto us. If thou obligest us not, to feed on Locusts, thou wouldst at least, that we should feed upon the bread of tears, and mix our drink with those salt bitter streams. Thou wouldst that I should make my feasts near to the fountain of Sichar, at Jacob's well full of deep mysteries, and full



of living waters, full of joy and consolation: that I should seek for my delights in thee my Saviour, that art that fountain Springing up to everlasting life: Thou wouldst that I should feed upon thy love, and find no joys but in thee: **O** do it then my Saviour, take from me all relish of the pleasures of this world; and let my heart be entirely possessed by thee: and let me taste that pleasure that fills the capacity of my soul in such a measure, that when it feels those sweets, it may cry out, My Soul is satisfied as it were with marrow and farness.

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### CHAP. III.

*What Innocent Pleasures are, that Devotion is not Chagrine, nor an Enemy to Pleasures.*

**I** Have proved in the foregoing Chapters that the Spirit of Devotion is an Enemy to sensual Pleasures, and not only to those that are called Criminal, but to those also that are reputed Innocent. In this Rank I have placed those continual Diversion to which the greater Number and the better Sort give themselves over. 'Tis time to explain our selves

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upon this Question, Whether it be necessary to the being a good Christian and truly devout, to renounce all Sort of Pleasures? But 'tis not to be answer'd in a Word, because 'tis one of the most nice and delicate Points of Christian Morality.

I say then, first of all, that Devotion is not an Enemy of Delights. It permits us to distinguish Innocent from Criminal ones: 'Tis neither fierce nor brutal, but should be honest, civil, sweet and modest: It flies all Softness, and decks not it self in Flowers; but neither does it affect to appear horrid, or beset with Thorns and Prickles; In a Word, it is not necessary to the Faithful, that to be truly devout, he should feed on Troubles, Discontents, and black Melancholy. On the other Side, Piety is gay and free, *the Heart of the just is a continual Feast*; Our Lord would not have us affect a sad Countenance, and a dejected Look, but bids us even in our Fastings and Mortifications, *anoint our heads with Oil, when we would be seen of Men, and avoid Ostentation in our Devotions.*

To know which Pleasures are Innocent, we must distinguish with Exactness, and make a short Review, but general, of all the Orders and Degrees of Pleasure.

First then, all Pleasures are either of the Mind or Sense. Of the Senses some are more visibly fastned to Matter, others less. Of the

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first Kind, are the Taste and Touch; of the second, are the Sight and Hearing. The more spiritual Pleasures are, the easier 'tis to make them Innocent; the more material, the commoner they are to us with Beasts, and more easily become brutal and criminal. The Pleasures of the Touch and Taste, are such, and are common to us with the Beasts. To look upon them in themselves; they are unworthy of a Man, as he is Man, and let them exceed never so little, they become in a Manner brutal: But however, 'tis certain that these Pleasures, because they are necessary, are in some Degrees innocent. There are Pleasures inseparable from those Actions that are necessary to the Conservation of Life; such as are eating, drinking, and sleeping. These Pleasures cannot be Enemies to Vertue and Devotion. God is the Author of them: He hath put certain Agreements betwixt our Senses and their Objects; he hath annexed certain Pleasures to certain Actions, to the End we should love to do them, and take Pains without Vexation, in what is necessary to our Preservation. We cannot hinder our selves from judging that Sugar is sweet, and Gall bitter, to find Pleasure in good Victuals, and a kind of Trouble in eating a Thing whose Taste we don't like. 'Tis impossible not to feel a great deal of Pleasure in drinking after a long and grievous Thirst: This is not what I call the Use of the Pleasures of this World, for the Use I mean is voluntary, and this is not so. Now  
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Christian Morality, as severe as it is, cannot accuse involuntary Sentiments of a Fault. We cannot separate this Sense of Pleasure from the Actions necessary to Life; and though we could, we should not be oblig'd to do it. The Moral of Christianity commands us not to mix our Meats with Gall, nor our Drinks with Wormwood. If there are any such devout Ones in the World, that make their Vertue consist in the Privation of these necessary Pleasures, and say, *Give me the grace, O God, to feel no pleasure in the use of the things of this World,* they are either Hypocrites, or intoxicated with vain Superstition. But let us take good heed, this is a slippery Place and dangerous Step; the Borders that bound and separate Innocence from Faultiness are so delicate, that they are almost imperceptible, and we pass from one to the other, without knowing it. The Point of Separation is that which divides the *Necessary* from the *Superfluous*. 'Tis innocent to find Pleasure in Eating, 'tis faulty to eat to find Pleasure. We must take our Food as we take our Physick, for Necessity only, and this cannot possibly be faulty, although we should find Pleasures in the Way. But farther we cannot pass without some Danger, there can nothing be better thought on, than what Saint *Austin* said on this Occasion. *Then, when I pass from the incommodity of hunger to the refreshment I find by eating, my Concupiscence lays Snares in the way; for 'tis accompanied with Pleasure,*



*and there is no other way to come to that Refreshment which Necessity forces us to seek; and though the support of life be the only thing that obliges us to eat and drink, the dangerous Pleasure crosses us in the passage, and looks at first like a Servant, but oft-times makes attempts to pass on forwards, and makes me do that for it which I design'd only to do for pure Necessity. And that which serves to deceive us herein, is, that Necessity has not the same extent that Pleasure has, being commonly satisfied with that which carries no Pleasure along with it. Oft-times we are uncertain, whether 'tis the Necessity of supporting Life, that carries us to eat, or the deluding Charms of Pleasure; and our unfortunate Souls are pleas'd with this uncertainty, and look about for Excuses to defend themselves.*

The Hearing and the Sight provide us Pleasures more pure, and less carnal; the Brutes know nothing of them, they are only proper to Men: If Beasts find Pleasure in the Sight of certain Objects, 'tis always by the Connexion there is betwixt those Objects and the Pleasures of the Taste and Touch, of which alone they are sensible. But yet 'tis certain, that of these Pleasures of the Sight and Hearing, there are some exceeding criminal; and such are those that have a particular Alliance with the Corruption of our Hearts and Minds, and are capable of awakening that Corruption: Of this Order, are all lascivious Pictures and obscene Figures, impure Talk, the Sights  
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on the Stage, humane Beauties charg'd with borrow'd Ornaments; accompanied with Gestures, Words and Actions proper to the kindling foul unclean Desires. When we use these Pleasures, we abuse our Senses; for the use of them is unlawful; but amongst these Pleasures of the Senses of the Sight and Hearing, there may be found some innocent, and those are they alone almost, that come immediately from God's Hand, without having pass'd through Mens. Poor Man is so unhappy as to leave Traces of his Corruption upon every Thing he meddles with. One cannot be faulty in looking with Pleasure and with Admiration on the Beauty of the Heavens, their Order, Motion, and their Light; on fine Countries, verdant Meadows, and the agreeable Obscurity of a Forest, and a River that winds along the Hills. One cannot be faulty in finding Pleasure in the Murmurs of a gliding Brook; the lovely Musick of the pretty Birds, rejoycing in the Woods for the return of Spring. All these Delights disturb not the Soul, nor put it into any disorderly Motion, the Impressions they make are sweet and soft, and not being violent, they transport not the Soul beyond its self and due Bounds, and therefore they are Friends enough to Piety. These pure and natural Ideas, may excite Movements of Admiration of our great Creator, and an Acknowledgment of their Author, and consequently may inspire us with Devotion to the Deity.

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There are other corporeal Pleasures, that I cannot well refer to any of the Senses, and therefore I call them the Pleasures of Imagination. And of this Kind, is the Pleasure of having fine Houses, rich Moveables, magnificent Garbs, a great Train, and abundance of People to eat his Meat. And these Pleasures are not without their Fault; they are Pleasures of Imagination, and therefore of Illusion, and where there is Illusion, there is Vanity; and where there is Vanity, there is some Fault. Therefore the wise Man cries out on every Thing, *Vanity of Vanities*: But there is somewhat more than Illusion in the Case, there is also Pride. The Pleasure that this vain Pomp brings, this Luxury and State comes from the Desire we have to appear *Great*, and to be so indeed. We easily deceive other Men, and we would try to deceive our selves. We are like those Dwarfs, that affects to stand on high Places, to diminish their natural Lowness; and therefore People that have least Merit and true Greatness, are commonly fondest of these false Greatnesses and fine Appearances. There are Conditions from which Magnificence is as it were inseparable: God that hath invested Kings with Power, takes it not ill they should be cloath'd in Purple. And 'tis necessary they should be surrounded with Pomp and Lustre, to surprize the Senses, to obtain with more Ease the respect that is due to their high Station. 'Tis an ordinary Illusion of the Senses, this that makes

makes us look upon, as great, all that dazles us. But 'tis an Illusion that in these Cases has its Use and Benefit. Where the true Greatness of Condition and Authority is, we may well bear with appearing Greatnesses: But yet there may be a Fault in its Excess, as in other Things. The great Ones resemble those Giants, that are not content with their natural Greatness, but stretch out their Hands towards Heaven, that they may be seen the farther off. But above all, 'tis a mad Pleasure that, when one is little in all respects, to please one's self with appearing Great, and cloathing their contemptible Dust with Purple, that heretofore was proper only to the Throne. This is a Fault in our Age, and which I believe we exceed all other Ages in; and the Corruption is now spread so far, that we think our selves oblig'd to follow it; for there are wise and pious Persons, that propose, with great Assurance, this dangerous Maxim, That one should not distinguish one's self, but that every one should go cloath'd according to their Quality and Condition, and affect nothing singular: In a Word, they boldly blame those Women, that making Profession of great Devotion, are but simply and meanly attir'd, and far from the Pomp of Persons of their Rank. 'Tis a strange Thing we should be at such a Distance from Devotion, that we should be affraid to come near it, and shun even all Appearances thereof. According to this Maxim, 'twould be well, that Christian Women should be clad in richer Stuffs and  
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more magnificent, that they should be adorn'd with Gold and Jewels, in all abundance, since People of Quality are so; if they retrench these Vanities, to do Alms, and be merciful to the Poor, they are accus'd of being Devotresses. The Mischief seems to be without a Remedy, when it has gotten so much ground as this. The Church thought heretofore that it relax'd exceedingly, when it but tolerared these Disorders, but I'm afraid 'twill quickly come to give them Approbation. I would fain know of those that maintain this Maxim, where they could possibly find it. It is not in the holy Scriptures; for St. *Peter* expressly forbids the Christian Women, gold and embroidered Hair. 'Tis not in the Fathers, for they speak with more Force when they speak against the Luxury and Pomp of Habits, than against any thing besides; they call it the Pomp of the Devil. They preach in all Places against this Vanity, and say, That by the Laws of Charity one is oblig'd to renounce those Superfluities, to cloath the Poor, and comfort the Afflicted, and maintain the tottering Church. They would have it, that the Plainness of Habits should be a Token of Piety, and of our renouncing of the World.

Now for all Love, let them shew us a Reason, why People must not distinguish themselves. What does it mean? Must we follow the Stream? because an Evil is common, Must we not strive against it? Must we not try to get out of the Croud that are going to Destruction?

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For my part on the contrary; I think we must distinguish our selves if we have but the Courage to do it. I would fain know, if great Modesty be not as good in Garbs as in other Things: If it be good, can it be bad to shew an Example of it? Is it not rather an Honour to march the forwardest in the Way of Vertue? I know that Habits have all along been different, according to Mens Conditions. But first we must observe, that in our Days, there are few or none that carry not their State beyond their Rank. Now it is always Honourable to do what one should, according to the Condition one is in, although one should be single and alone. Moreover, heretofore they distinguish'd not Conditions so exactly as they now do; the difference of Conditions must have been exceeding great, to have People permitted to distinguish themselves from others by Magnificence. It was not enough to have been Rich, or of Birth rais'd above the Vulgar. But if at this Time of Day we suffer Men to be cloathed, and make Dependences according to their Conditions, Pride and Vanity, that mark out the Bounds of Distinction, will throw Men into great extravagant Excesses. It is good furthermore, to consider, that there is a difference between tolerating a Thing as a Thing permitted, and authorizing it as a Thing necessary. We can bear that the great ones should be distinguish'd by their Equipage and Train, and by their Garbs, provided it run not to that excess that now a-days reigns. But certainly we must

must never make it a Rule, and a Duty, nor tell them, that they ought not to distinguish themselves. On the other Hand, we must let them know, that 'tis a glorious Thing to renounce to these miserable vain Things, that are so displeasing to God. In a Word, this Maxim was never more dangerous, than it is in our Days. To expend according to Mens Conditions, according to the style of the World, is to expend all one's Estate, in Vanities, Cloaths, Ornaments, Equipages, and Things of that Nature. When therefore any one says to another, distinguish not your self, but do as the rest of your Condition do: It is certain, he authorizes that unhappy Profuseness, that incapacitates Men from being liberal to the Church and Poor. Say therefore all that can be said, I shall never think that Man truly and perfectly Devout, whilst I see him encompassed with the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World. One cannot have true Devotion without being truly humble. But now this Reason that they give us, that makes Men make such profitless Expences, according forsooth to their Conditions, fetches its rise from Pride. The true Christian that considers himself, with respect to himself and God, knows he is nothing but Dust and Ashes, and a very Nothing before God. He understands very well, that God knows all the differences of our Conditions. And thus every good Soul will undoubtedly renounce this *excess* of Habits, and

and all other vain *superfluous* Expence, to do good Works.

We must not, in a word, persuade our selves, that this Morality, which is truly that of Jesus Christ, is a Way that leads to Superstition, and that pious Persons are oblig'd to attire themselves in a base and extravagantly vile Manner. 'Tis in this respect we must bid them *affect nothing singular*. But there is a wide difference betwixt the Magnificence of the Age, and such habiting as would make People ridiculous. I could not deny this small Digression, to combat the Corruption of these Days, in favour of those good Souls, that earnestly desire to do their Duty, but understand not well to what they are obliged. I now return to the Pleasures of Imagination, of which I had begun to speak.

Amongst those I call the Pleasures of Imagination, I find some that are innocent. For Example: A Man may innocently set his Heart upon the Culture of a little piece of Ground, and take as much delight in his poor Cottage, as in *Whitehall*; and in his pretty Garden, as in the Park. He may perfectly make himself happy in dressing up his Borders, his Pallisades, his Arbors, his Wall-fruit, and his Dwarf-trees. He may gather his Fruits, with greater Acknowledgments of God's Goodness, than Monarchs do, in raising Tribute upon all their Kingdoms. A Father of a Family may take great pleasure in the ordering of his House, a Woman at her Work, and a Tradesman at the  
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success of his Labours. It may be there is not in all this any real Felicity ; they are Pleasures of Imagination, but 'tis not of a foolish Imagination, that is fed with Illusions ; 'tis an Imagination, guided by Reason, enlightned by Grace, and that judges that one should more esteem what one has, than what one has not. These Pleasures and innocent Mistakes, if we may call them so, are by no means Enemies to the Spirit of Devotion.

There are also Pleasures of the Mind (of another Sort than those of the Imagination) which are in themselves innocent, such as, good Conversation, the reading good Books, eloquent Discourses, the study of Sciences, and Works of Wit and Learning. But there is a great deal of Precaution to be used here ; first, There is Reason to fear, lest we confound the Wit with its Impurity. Oft-times we believe we find a great deal of Pleasure in a Work, because there is a great deal of Wit, but indeed, 'tis only because there is a great deal of Impurity in it : There are certain Productions of Wit, that flatter our Passions, such as are the Pieces of the Theatre, Romantick Stories, and what the World calls *Gallantry* in Prose and Verse. We admire the delicacy of Expression, the beauty of the Thought, and the force of the Imagination ; but look a little nearer, and you shall find the Heart incomparably more affected than the Mind : We love these Productions, because they have a secret Alliance with the corruption of our Heart,

Heart, and a Conformity with the Impressions of our sullied and impure Imagination. The Pleasure that rises from them, comes from the Impurity that is delicately scattered up and down. There are Objects whose Turpitude is so great, that they create an horror in us of them; and when they are shewn to us stark naked, we cannot endure the sight; but we can willingly enough see them by Glances as it were, and through a loose Veil, that takes away all that is choquing, and nauseous to the Eyes, but lets them wholly in upon the Imagination, which entertains them with extream Pleasure and Greediness. This is the Character of the Pieces we speak of: But we must take good Heed, that amongst our innocent Diversions, we place not those that arise from Sciences, that are criminal, curious, and visibly vain, of no Use and Purpose, but to fill the Brains, and empty them of all good Things besides. We must also observe, that 'tis permitted us to relish Pleasure in the Studies of good Letters, and innocent and profitable Notions; but we must take good Heed that we suffer our selves not to be too far possessed with them. For nothing can be innocent, that becomes an Obstacle to our Devotion.

This is sufficient, I think, to shew; that Devotion has not declared War with Pleasures and Delight. In making a wise and prudent Choice of Pleasures, one may find enough to sweeten all the Bitternesses of this Life, so that it will not be necessary to bury our  
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selves alive, and keep our Soul always in Sorrow, always in Trouble and Perplexity, and dark and melancholy Humour.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

How much do I owe to thee, O God! what shall I render to thee, for having plac'd me amidst so many good Things, and leaving me to the enjoyment of them? I should have had no reason to complain, if after so much disobedience, he should have snatch'd me from this World, to throw me into Hell. Or was it not in his power to make this World a kind of Hell to me, that I might be saved in the other? One could not have blamed his Wisdom nor his Justice, had he submitted me here to continual punishments, had he shut up from me all Springs of pleasure and delight; had he turned all my fair Days into so many sad and dismal Nights. He might have given me Eyes for nothing but to be fill'd with Tears, and Ears to receive no sound but that of Thunder and the Voice of his Judgments; a Taste for nothing but the bitterness of Gall and Wormwood; a Touch to be sensible of nothing but the weight of his Blows: He might have mingled all my Feasts with Gall, and empoisoned every Object, and enclosed them, as it were, with Thorns, to pierce me through at coming near them. Had he done this, I should have said, that he is just, and I a wretched Sinner; it is but reasonable that this World, polluted by my sins, should be the Theatre of my sufferings, and that the Objects of my Senses, over all which my Corruption is spread, should become

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come the punishment of my Offences. But all on the other side, God that commands me to be sober, wise and temperate, to renounce to the vain pleasures of the World and Flesh, yet has left me pleasures more than I deserve; sufficient to temper and make supportable the sad effects and consequences of my sin. 'Tis true, sometimes he strikes me, and makes me feel the fierceness of his Anger: I am subject to Distempers, I may languish and become faint; I may lose the good things he hath given me; I may be despoiled of my Honours, and I may be persecuted: But when I reckon up my evil Days, and compare them with my good, I find that these are more than those; my pleasures carry it infinitely above my pains. If I put together all my hours of sicknesses, disquiet, and vexations, 'twill make perhaps but a few months, or at most but a few years, but how many years of health and prosperity hath God bestowed on me? O wretched and ungrateful that I am; a little pain in my Finger makes me become insensible of the health of my whole Body; an hour of disquiet poisons my whole Life, and makes me forget all my Prosperities, and all the Obligations that I have to God. But should my misfortunes have gone farther, and continued longer, they had not yet been as long as my life, and consequently had been of less continuance than my sins: And therefore I should have had no reason to complain, but rather to boast of his favours and goodness. For if I have been unhappy for some years, yet I have been a Sinner from my first moment. And should the minutes of my sufferings pass in God's Accounts, and satisfy his justice for as many minutes



of my Sin, what wouldst thou owe him yet, my Soul, for all the rest, since the number of thy sufferings comes not near the number of thy Sins? The minutes in which God hath suffered me to enjoy his good Gifts, have been those in which I have made my self most faulty, by the abuse of my Prosperity: And the least sin I have committed in one of those minutes, might deserve the pains of infinite Duration.

### P R A Y E R.

Great God, that makest all things with immense wisdom, I have nothing to blame in all thy works: For all that thou hast made is very good. But I bewail my own misery, and declare my corruption. The good dwells in the neighbourhood of evil, and the things thou permittest me are so near to what thou forbiddest, that if I never so little forget my self, from innocent I pass to criminal delights. The Devil lies in Ambuscade in every place, and my concupiscence throws out its Snares on every hand: The way is strait, and borders still on Precipices. I know, my God, thou art of infinite goodness, and requirest not of me, that I should live continually in grief; thou yieldst something to the flesh, as great a rebel as it is against thee. But hard it is, and dangerous, to mark precisely out the bounds that

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that separate lawfull pleasures from forbidden ones. If I listen to my desires, they will extend them far beyond all reason; they will endeavour to persuade me, that whatever is agreeable cannot be bad; that whether I eat or drink, or sleep, or wake, hunger, or thirst, be idle or in labour, I am always under temptation, and in perpetual fear of falling into excess. Thy providence would have me pass through all these dangers; 'tis thou alone art capable of conducting me securely through so hard and difficult a way. O let thy Spirit lead me forth into the smooth way, and suffer me not to turn unto the right, nor to the left. Here are two extremities to avoid; thou abhorrest carnal pleasures, but it may be too, thou lovest not excessive austerities; bodily exercise profiteth but little, but godliness hath the promises of the present life, and of that which is to come. I know, my God, there is a great deal of danger in each extremity. All that thou sayest of bodily exercise is this, that it is profitable but to few things, but for the other excess, to wit, of pleasures, it spoils every thing, it ravages the conscience, sullies the heart, ruins the body, grieves the holy Spirit, and separates the soul from thee, my God. It is incomparably the surest therefore, to renounce to pleasures in general, than to chuse out some

some particular ones, exposing one's self thereby to the danger of chusing some unlawful ones. O thou that holdest in thy hand the hearts of Men, as the rivers of waters, direct thou mine in the surest way, in which I may be certain not to be able to offend thee, and that is, the privation of all sensual pleasures. Take from me the relish of these joys with which I am enchanted: Pluck from this devil of pleasure, the masque that covers him, and that false beauty that so charms me; that I may see all its deformities, and fly and have them in abhorrence. Since the body thou obligest me to carry about me, to nourish and to preserve, obliges me to actions that are join'd with pleasure, give me the grace to do those actions to satisfy necessity, and not to serve my pleasures. Discover to me the snares that concupiscence lays under the veil of necessity; suffer me not to make that necessary by an evil habit, which is superfluous by the laws of nature and of reason: Let my soul, under thy guidance, keep my body as its Slave, and not obey it as its Lord and Master.

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## C H A P. IV.

*That we should not consult our Heart  
and Sense in the Choice of Pleasure,  
and that Devotion leads to true  
Pleasure.*

WE believe that to the obtaining any Thing, one must ask a great deal more than one would have; and that to withdraw Men from their Errors, it is good to carry Matters a little to the other Extream; to the end, that in returning, they may at least continue in a reasonable Mean. This is that, it may be, that hath set so many Christian Authors and Preachers on imitating the Style of the Stoicks, in Discourfing on the Nature of Pain and Pleasure. These People tell us Pain is no Evil, nor Pleasure any Good, and one may be compleatly happy in *Phalaris* his *Burning-Bull*; and compleatly miserable amidst the greatest Pleasures. This Method is not, it may be, so very good as they imagine; it mightily discourages the Mind to require of it too much, and one can persuade to nothing, when one cloaths the Truth in Paradoxes, for they but awaken the Curiosity, and make the Mind wild and uneasy; and after all, one cannot persuade Men contrary to what they feel. *Tully* tells us of a Philosopher that was  
blinded.



blinded in this Matter as far as any of the rest, by the pompous Reasonings of his Sect, but a great defluxion of Rheum upon his Eyes, which caused him a horrible deal of Pain, prevail'd over the Illusions of his Philosophy, and made him quit those fond Opinions. When we see one of these wise Men lying on his Bed cruelly tormented with the Gout and Stone, and hear him cry out, *'Tis to no purpose this, O pain, for thou shalt never make me confess thou art an Evil!* One could not help looking upon this as a Comedy, and a piece of profound Hypocrisy. Reason can do nothing against Experience, and especially a Sense so quick as that of Pain. I can conceive very well how the Martyrs were happy amidst their Punishments, because they felt not all their Pains. For I believe their Souls, by the help of God's Grace, were so fully possess'd with the hopes of Glory, and the Crown they were near upon receiving, that there was no place left for any other Sentiments. The Patience of the Faithful in their Sufferings, proceeds, in my Opinion, from nothing else, but that their Souls are fix'd on God and Heaven; the Objects of their Hope, and loosened in part from their Body, and less attended to their Evils. Impatience on the other Hand is a motion of the Soul, that turns to the Body's side, and abandons it self to Pain, and feels it every bit. I conclude then, that Pain is an Evil, and that is to own, that bodily Pleasure is a Good. I think I owed this Confession to those

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those that would oblige us to renounce to sensual Pleasures; to the end, I may have them, by this Sincerity, the more attentive to my Reasonings. We solicit them therefore, not to renounce the Pleasures of the Body, as Evil in themselves, but as an inconsiderable Good, that draws after in an incredible train of Mischiefs, and as a Good unworthy of a Man that's born for nobler Pleasures, and design'd for the possession of much greater Goods. We shall never be able to rid the Mind of Man, do what we can, of that Opinion, that Felicity consists in Pleasure. I would not dispute this Maxim, the Sovereign Happiness consists undoubtedly in possessing of the Sovereign Good, and in this Possession the Soul feels its chief Good, and may, if it will, call it its Sovereign Happiness. But Men are mightily cheated in this Matter, they persuade themselves, that the Soul is only capable of such Pleasures as proceed from the Body. Amongst the common Sort, a Spiritual Pleasure, and a chimerical or fanciful Pleasure, is one and the same Thing. All such as make their Happiness consist in Contemplation, and in Actions wholly different from those that create us carnal Pleasure, pass in the World for meer Visionaries. This Error is caused by the Sense and Heart, and therefore I say, in the Judgment we should make of Pleasures, and the Choice of them, we should consult neither our Heart nor Sense. I say, this Error is caused by the Sense and by the Heart, because

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they

they think nothing is truly pleasant but what seems so to them. We judge Things good or evil by the reference they have to our Senses, to which they bring or Pain or Pleasure, therefore the Heart and Senses, which are bodily, cannot be touch'd by Things Spiritual; they imagine they cannot be pleasant, because they cannot feel that Pleasure. Just as if a blind Man should judge according to his Senses; he would undoubtedly judge there was no such Thing as Colour, or if there was, it could make no impression on the Soul. This is an Illusion must be scattered and driven away.

First then, we must remember, that Man is made up of two Parts, the Soul and Body, and each of these has its distinct Goods; the Goods of the Soul are spiritual, those of the Body bodily. Of these two Parts, the Soul is infinitely the more excellent, and properly *the Man*, and the Body belongs to this Man, and by consequence the Goods and Pleasures that belong to the Soul by it self, are infinitely greater than the Goods that accrew to it, by its conjunction with the Body. In short, it is easy to comprehend why the Heart and Senses judge otherwise, they are bodily Faculties, and tis no wonder that they hold for Things bodily. As for the Senses, 'tis without dispute, that they, their Organs, and their Operations, are bodily and always favour of it. 'Tis no less true of the Heart, that it is bodily; and by the Heart I understand

derstand the Seat of the Passions and Imagination; 'tis evident, that both these Faculties are corporeal. The Imagination is, for 'tis the Place where those Images that come to us from the Senses meet, and offer themselves to our Minds when their true Objects are away: The Passions are also Corporeal, for they are formed and made by Motions purely mechanical; and this we see by the Characters they impress on the Body, such as are the motion of the Blood, quick or slow, or precipitated, the paleness or redness of Hew, the fire or faintness they empress on the Eyes. The Senses therefore, and the Heart, which are bodily, being the Gates by which Objects enter our Souls, they carry with them none but corporeal Images, and cause in it none but sensual Pleasures; and the Soul gets a Habit of believing that there are no other, because it never tries to unloose it self from the Body, or taste any Thing besides. But is it possible we should believe our Senses in so important a Matter, against our Interest and against our Reason? The Senses are not capable of knowing the thousandth part of what belongs to Bodies. As soon as a Body ceases to have any considerable extension, we cease to see and feel it; and would we make these Senses Judges of Things absolutely Spiritual? In good Truth, the Soul is miserable and Slave enough, if it cannot taste that Pleasure which is its Sovereign Happiness, by means of the Body: If Matter be the Source of



true Pleasure, what shall those Souls do that are separated from Matter? What is the Happiness of Angels that have no Body? And yet is it not true, that their Pleasures should as far transcend ours, as Spirits are above Matter? Spiritual Pleasures come undoubtedly from the understanding of the Truth, from the practice of Vertue, from our Union with God by the Bonds of our Love to him, and from that Action by which God does immediately unite himself to our Souls. All this is absolutely above our Senses, they know not the Truth, for their Office is only to bring and carry up and down the Images of Bodies; they cannot judge of Virtue, 'tis not of their Cognisance, and much less can they judge of that mutual Union betwixt God and the Soul. Thus though they give us no Intelligence of these Affairs, yet 'tis not to be doubted, but that they make real Impressions on our Souls.

But whence comes it, say some, that Spiritual Pleasures are not so affecting, that they make not such powerful Impressions on the Soul, as corporeal Pleasures do? For we do not see the Pious and Devout one in such Transports of Joy and Pleasure, as we see Men have in the Enjoyments of their sensual Pleasures: And is it not a Proof that these Pleasures of the Mind are but imaginary ones, or at least but very languid ones? This difficulty comes from hence, that we cannot well distinguish the Body from the Soul; we believe it is affected proportionably to the greatness of the

the Agitation of its bodily Organs; and persuade our selves that it cannot receive an impression of Joy, but by the mediation of these great bodily Motions. But 'tis not so, 'tis certain, that in those great Pleasures which the Soul receives from the Body, it receives them by those Agitations of the Body, and by the rapid Motion of the Blood and Spirits, but the Pleasures of the Saints that are included in the Soul it self, and that shew abroad no outward Tokens, yet cease not to make very great Impressions: They are so great and so affecting, these Joys, that they transport the Soul beyond it self, and out of the World. It must needs be, that the Joy that comes from our possessing God, from the knowledge of his Truth, the imitation of his Vertues, and Excellencies, must needs be infinitely above all sensual Joys. Since for their Sakes, we do not only renounce all bodily Pleasure, but expose our selves to all the most sensible Torments imaginable. 'Tis true, the more the Soul is accustomed to let it self be mov'd by those Agitations that cause bodily Pleasures and Passions, the less capable it is of tasting spiritual and inward Joys. And this is one of the greatest Evils arising from the continual use of bodily Pleasures. The Soul waxeth fat and wanton, as the Holy Ghost speaks, and lightly regards the Rock of its Salvation. It cloaths it self, as one may say, with Flesh and Blood, and relishes nothing else but what proceeds from thence, and flatters them.

And therefore, of all the Pleasures of the Sense, we only permit our truly devout Man to taste of what is very moderate, and that too, very moderately. The Senses love to receive strong Impressions from their Objects, and, provided they be not hurt thereby, the greatest bodily Pleasures are those, whose Motions are so strong, that they come very near to Pains. The Imagination also loves to be strongly moved; but all these Impressions are so strong upon the Soul, that it can hardly come to it self again; and therefore we must carefully avoid them all.

But if we want more sensible Proofs, that the Heart, the Passions and Senses, should not be consulted in the Choice of Pleasures; hearken to Experience, and see the disorders of the World. They are the effects of this blindness of Mens Understandings, that follow the Directions of their Hearts and Senses in their choice of Pleasures. How came our Mother *Eve* to venture on the forbidden Fruit, but because it was fair and pleasant to the Sight? She hearkned to her Heart and Senses. How come Corruptions to so high a pitch in the World, that it constrained the Justice of God to bring a horrible Flood upon the Earth, but because the Sons of God saw the Daughters of Men, and found them beautiful, and shut their Ears to God's Voice, that spake unto them? They listned to the Solicitations of their Senses and their Hearts, and took these worldly Beauties, and became corrupted with them.  
How

How came *David* to commit Adultery and Murder in so short a Time, but that he listned to his Heart and Senses, and let himself be led away by his Passions? How became *Solomon* an Idolater, but by his criminal Affections to his Wives, blinding him, and separating him from God, and shutting up the Ears of his Soul and Understanding? In a word, how came *St. Peter* to deny his Master, but that his Heart, his Senses and Imagination, made him see Death present, and very terrible, and he consulted neither God nor Reason?

It may be thought that we confound the Innocent and Guilty, when we speak of our Heart and Senses, as the common Sources of our Errors; because the Senses seem to be unfortunate and miserable, rather than criminal: 'Tis true, the Senses are subject to two Misfortunes, the first is, to be forced to take in Objects that are criminal, and capable of carrying Corruption to our Hearts, such as are ill Examples, scandalous Words and Actions; and the second is, that they receive innocent Objects, and sometimes in an innocent manner, but that they are sullied and polluted in the Heart. However, I think, we cannot separate the Senses from the Heart, for they make but one and the same whole. 'Tis a Match, at whose end there is a heap of Gunpowder and Brimstone fastned; the Heart and Imagination are the inmost end of the Match, and the Magazine of Powder; the Senses are the other Extremity and End, to which the Objects



set fire. That glides, or rather flies along the Match, and sets the Heart and Imagination on a flame, and therefore the Holy Ghost put for the same Thing, to walk according to *one's Heart*, and according to *one's Eye-sight*.

In a word, if we would be perfectly assur'd that the Heart and Senses are bad Counsellors in this Affair; hear what the holy Scriptures say to it: They look upon our Hearts as the Sources of all our Evils; *the thoughts of mens hearts are evil continually: It is deep and desperately wicked, who can know it? From the heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Whoredoms, Thefts, false Witnesses, evil Speakings, these are the things that defile the man.* The Holy Ghost represents the Heart, as a blind Man, environ'd with a thick Cloud and great Darkness. It speaks of it as of a dead Thing, it is earthly, sensual. How can a Heart thus made, be Judge of what are true Pleasures and truly good Things? How can any good Thing proceed from so empoisoned a Spring? So the wise Man puts this Maxim amongst the rest, that we should hate — *Walk in the ways of thy Heart, and in the sight of thine Eyes.* —

I would end here, if it were not necessary, to remove a Scandal, that some may take at what has been said, that sensual Pleasure is a Good, and good too for the Soul; for if the Soul be the only Thing that feels and relishes Pleasure, and that Pleasure is a Good, 'tis the good of the Soul; if it is a Good, then we must seek for it, and love it. You will say,

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'tis not sufficient to answer, that 'tis a Good of the Body only ; that is not true, absolutely speaking ; 'tis in some sort a good of the Soul, since 'tis the Soul that relishes it: Farthermore, although it were only a Good of the Body, yet would it not therefore be unlawful, for 'tis not always forbid us to seek the Good of the Body ; but we must not only consider a Thing in it self, to know whether it be good or evil, but look upon it in its Causes and Effects, in that which goes before, and that which follows. I would have the Pleasure that comes to the Soul by the Body, let it be a kind of Good, considered in it self. Look on it in its Source, and see what it produces. The Source is Sin, and 'tis Impurity, 'tis Rebellion against the Laws of the Creator. That which it brings forth, is the disuniting the Soul from God ; 'tis an engagement with Death, 'tis Pain and Fire, and everlasting Horror. How then can we conceive under the notion of Good, a Thing that is encompass'd with so many moral Impurities, and so many real Miseries? If bodily Pleasure may be called a Good, with respect to the present Sentiment of the Soul, 'tis an Evil in every other respect, and an Evil absolutely speaking, and therefore wise Men of all Ages have placed it amongst the false Goods ; for what is truly, and in it self good, must be good, what ever side you look upon it from. The Soul hath then no true Pleasure, but what arises from its Union with God ; and this  
Union

Union is so much the stronger, by how much the looser we sit from Things sensible, and closer to God, by the knowledge of the Truth; not of those Truths Philosophy teaches us to find, but never find with any certainty; but of those heavenly Truths that Faith discovers to us, those saving Truths that are the Lamps and Lanthorns of the Soul. *Thy Word is a Lanthorn to my feet, and light unto my paths; it enlightens the Eyes, and giveth understanding to the simple.* The second Bond that unites us to God, is Vertue, whose practice makes us like our Creator, renews his Image in us, and makes us to be the Copies of that Beauty, of which he is the Original. The third Bond is Love, that Love by which we love God, and by which he loves us, by which he is in Us, and we in Him; because this Love makes a transfusion as it were of Hearts, and makes the Soul dwell more in the beloved Object, than in that it animates. As to that Pleasure that springs from this Union, it is of the number of those Things that cannot well be conceived but by such as feel it. It is such, that all the Pleasures of the World seem dead and languishing in comparison of it, to those who have once tasted it. So great, that it hath made the Saints that have been extraordinarily affected with it, to fall into holy Extasies and Ravishments, that seemed to have entirely broken the Bonds that tie the Body to the Soul. Now 'tis unquestionable that Devotion leadeth to these Joys; it diminishes the

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the Union betwixt it and sensual Things; it unfastens us from the Body, it raises us to God; it purifies our Souls by bringing them nearer to him; it communicates to them the Rays of that great Sun of Righteousness, and makes them like so many little Gods, by partaking the Glory of the great one.

## M E D I T A T I O N.

*I am not astonished, O my Soul, to see thee seek for Pleasure; thou seekest the good, and that which thou hast lost, that which was given thee, that which thou hast had, and that which thou shouldst yet have had, hadst thou remain'd but innocent. Thy God had made thee just and holy, this Holiness was that which united thee to him; thou wast divided from him when thou becamest sinful, and by this separation thou remainest deprived of Pleasure and Felicity; thou seekest in every thing the good that thou hast lost; but, blind as thou art, thou mistakest Shadows for Substances; thou leapest over several things, and if thou findest any thing that flatters and tickles thee, thou presently embraces it with as much Ardor, as if thou hadst found what thou hadst lost, and wast looking for. Thou art indeed disabused of thy mistake in a little Time, but 'tis only to fall into another: After thou once hast tasted sensual Pleasure, thou acknowledgest it is not that infinite Pleasure thou wast seeking for; thou leavest that Object then, and seekest for another; that thou embracest too, and feedest thy self*



self continually with new Illusions. Cease, O my heart, cease then to wander, and peruse these Faintomes; be not thus cheated by thy Senses and Imagination. Embrace thy God, 'tis he alone to whom thou owest that general Inclination, that makes thee love Felicity and Pleasure; but thy blind eyes make thee love false Goods, and fix thee to false joys and pleasures. If thou wert not exceedingly blind, thou couldst not doubt but God is infinite, and infinitely good, and infinitely better than all things in the world besides, and all Delights together. If created things are so sweet, how pleasant must an increated good be? The good that is the Author of all other goods, that includes in itself the Pleasure of all the rest? The good that spreads abroad in our Hearts, delights that are as far above all other joys, as he himself is above all other beings? Thou art incredulous, my heart, of this, because thou hast not felt the Sweets that spring from being united with God; thou sayest, as Thomas said, I will not believe unless I see, unless I feel these Joys. Ah! blessed is the man that hath believed before he saw, and hath surmounted all Temptations of the Flesh, and hath desired to taste all Temptations, before he tasted them. But happy more incomparably is he, that hath believed, and seen, and tasted those Delights, and felt those Joys that pass all understanding, that flow from the inmost Presence of my God! If thou hast not as yet, my Soul, been able to relish any spiritual delight, it is because thy God hath not been able yet to apply himself immediately to thee, and that by  
reason

reason of thy great Impurities, with which thou art over-run. For his eyes are pure, and cannot behold any thing unclean: he is Purity and Light it self, and thou art surrounded with the dark Clouds of Ignorance and Malice: how then should God unite himself with thee? Take therefore, take away the Veil, the Partition-wall, cure thy Ignorance, seek to know God and all his Mysteries, purify and cleanse thy self, remove that filth and dirt that covers thee, deliver thy self from those accursed habits of Vice that come about thee like a Cloak, and God will cloath thee again as it were with Light. Then thou wilt feel, that the Application of sensible Objects to thy Faculties is not capable of causing in thee a Sense of any such Delights as thou mayst have from God: then thou wilt be thoroughly disgusted at these vain Pleasures; thou wilt long to see thy God, to know him, to embrace him, to mix thy self with him, and be confounded as it were, that thou mayst be immediately united with him.

## P R A Y E R.

O glorious Father of all light, O inexhaustible source of joy and pleasure; insinuate thy self into all the Faculties of my soul, fill thou the space of my desires, and vast extent of my large heart, and let me feel those joys that thou communicatest to thy saints and favourites. I discover to thee my want, I confess to thee my nothingness, and languish after thee my true and solid good. Without thee, O my God,  
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I should be the miserablest of all thy creatures;  
 I should be lost in an abyss of pain and misery,  
 and feel continual anguish and horroz. But  
 oh, thou refreshest me in this vale of tears, thou  
 feedest me with the bread of Angels, and givest  
 drink as out of rivers of delights. The world  
 understands not these delights, the delicacies  
 of thy heavenly table are to it insipid; it can  
 taste nothing but the garlicks and flesh-pots of  
 Egypt, and knows not what is the hony of the  
 land of Canaan. I know it very well, but  
 know it not as I would and should under-  
 stand it. I have learnt of thy saints that  
 when thou speakest to thy childzen after their  
 own hearts, the sentiment that rises thereupon  
 is sweeter than the honey, and the honey-comb;  
 and they find more pleasure in possessing thee,  
 than the most covetous find in their abundance  
 of gold and silver. But alas, my soul as yet  
 hath never felt those heavenly transports! I  
 begin to find and to acknowledge that the plea-  
 sures of this world are incapable of satisfying  
 that hunger and thirst after felicity and plea-  
 sure, which I am labouring for, but have not  
 perfectly attained, O my God, thou who art  
 only capable of fulfilling both. O taste and see  
 how good and gracious the Lord is: I taste thee,  
 as I see thee; I see thee imperfectly, and as in  
 a glass, and I taste thee as somewhat hidden, and  
 wrapped up: not that thou art so enveloped, for  
 thou art wholly pure and simple, and whoever is  
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pure may taste thee purely, but the veil is in my flesh, or rather 'tis my flesh it self; 'tis my corruption separates me from thee. Come then, Lord Jesus, come; come, spirit creator, and creator of spirits: Create in me a new Heart, and renew a right Spirit within me. ¶ Let my soul be filled with thy delights, and let me taste the sweetness of the love. I am thirsty after pleasures, open the springs of thy eternal ones, and make those rivers to flow into my soul. Kiss me with the kisses of thy mouth, for thy love is sweeter than wine: Tell me, O thou, whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest at noon-day, why should I be as one that wandereth amongst the Roes of thy Companions? Why should my soul wander amongst the vain pleasures of the world, and why should it give thee so many false goods for companions? ¶ Let me retire under thy shadow, let me embrace thee, worship thee, and love thee only, and taste no joys but in thee. ¶ Draw me then that I may run after thee: draw near to me, that I may draw near to thee: prevent me by thy grace, thy mercies and thy bowels of compassion, yearning upon a wandering son that is in quest of thee, and cannot find thee. Awake, O north-wind, and come thou south, blow upon my Garden, that the spices may flow out, let my beloved come into his Garden and eat his pleasant Fruits. Blessed spirit, thou south-wind, Father of heat, Author of generation, Source of love  
and



and charity, breathe over all the faculties of my soul that are as it were a desert; make thou an Eden of it, a garden of the Lord God; cause thou to grow up there sweet labouring plants; bring forth there habits and works of good odour and scent, that my divine Saviour, the well-beloved of my soul, may come and taste the sweetness of those fruits: that he may take in me his pleasure, and I in him may take mine, that we may taste eternally, all the delights and pleasures mutual love can give.

## CHAP. V.

*That young Folks have no Privilege to use the Pleasures of the Senses, or to dispense with their Duty of Devotion,*

There is one Reflexion we must needs make, before we leave this weighty Subject: We have not as yet done any thing in respect to young Folks, who it may be may think that what we have hitherto said concerns not them. It is in a Manner impossible to deliver them from this Mistake, that Pleasure is their Lot and Inheritance, from which they cannot, without a kind of Tyranny, be driven away. Indevotion is natural to them,  
and

and they seem to glory in it: I should have  
fine to do, say they, to play the Bigot at my  
Age. They persuade themselves that Mode-  
sty, Wisdom, Sobriety, and Temperance do  
not fit handsomely on them: 'Tis the Busi-  
ness, say they, of old People; we should  
make our selves ridiculous, to play the *Seneca's*  
and *Cato's* and such wise Folks. And indeed,  
if any of them have better Inclinations than  
ordinary, they are asham'd of it, dissemble, and  
follow the Crowd. There is a Time, they say,  
for every Business under the Sun: If we con-  
sider old and young People, one can never be-  
lieve, that such different Persons can be de-  
stin'd to the same Actions: The wrinkled Fore-  
head of Age, the Paleness of Hue, the hollow  
Eyes, the fallen-in Mouth, and trembling  
Limbs, have some Agreement with the Acti-  
ons of Repentance, it is but reasonable that  
they should shed forth Tears, and give them-  
selves to Mortification: But the brave hail  
Complection of Youth and good Case, that  
Flower of Blood, that spreads it self over the  
Hue, the lively sparkling Eyes, the Senses  
sharp, and easily mov'd, each by their Objects,  
let us plainly see, this Age was made for Plea-  
sure and Delight. And thus it is, they flatter,  
and thus lull themselves: And 'tis not young  
Ones only talk at this gay Rate, but most of the  
World consent thereto. I will not deny but  
that such Excesses and Disorders of Life, leave  
upon Age a deeper Mark of Shame and In-  
famy, than Youth's Debauches do on them:

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Nay,

Nay, I will own that they discover a greater Mass and Bottom of Corruption, in the one than t'other. Age cannot throw its Faults upon the Boylings and first Sallies of its Blood, that throws up its Froth and Scum; it cannot have for its excuse the want of Experience. And in a Word, it must break through stronger Bonds and Holds of Shame, than the Sins of Youth. But yet, God will not judge Men, according to human Rules, and the Sentiments of the World, in these Cases; there is no Age that is dispensed with, by him, from paying him Obedience. All Violaters of his Laws shall be punished, because his Commands were given to all; and though the Difference of Age, may make a Difference of Faults in respect of the Punishment, yet this will only make, that some are more and some less; but alas, the less miserable shall have sufficient Reason to bewail their Case, for the least miserable shall have for their Inheritance eternal Flames, and a Worm that never dies. But why should young ones be less oblig'd to Devotion? Hath God given less unto them? nay sure, they have receiv'd of God, as well as their Elders, their Being and their Reason, but withal they have more Vigour of Body, more Strength of Mind, Health, Youth and the Flower of Age. These certainly are more particular Obligations on them to the serving of God. They have not received all these Advantages, to devote them unto the God of Pleasure and Concupiscence.

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Is it too good for God? Alas, they appoint to him a Body worn out, corrupted Lungs, Eyes quite extinguish'd, and dry and useless Members. In truth, God will be much oblig'd to them; they will give him the Dregs of their Age, and consecrate to him that Time, that is the Sink of Life, and Centre of all Miseries; that is to say, they will give him that, which the World cares for no longer; they will do as Wretches do, bestow their Liberalities when they are dying; and give what they can keep no longer. Believe me, all and the best we have is not too good for God. He would not heretofore have any Victims, that had any Blemish, or were sick and languishing, or had lost a Limb. Do we think he will accept the Offering of a Heart worn out, and of a Man that is but the Shadow of what he once was? I exhort you to present your Bodies a living Sacrifice. But those young Folks who make a Resolution to be devout, when they can sin no longer, promise to God dead and corrupted Carcasses. For so the Bodies of old Men are rather to be call'd. God hath thought nothing too good for us; he gave himself for us, and to us; he who is the Sovereign Good, he gave us his Son, and devoted him to Death for us in the Flower of his Age; and 'tis but just that we in every Age should be devoted to his Service.

God is not satisfied with Promises of Things to come, or *I will give*; he would have us



Speak in present Terms, and say, *I give* ; for so he speaks himself, *I give you my peace* ; he calls himself, he that *was*, and *is*, and *is to come* ; to him belong the Differences of Time, past, present, and to come : But of all Times he loves the present, and is he that *is*. Now he that would be like to God, and please him, must speak as he speaks ; *I am* he that *is* just, holy, separated from Sinners, devoted to God, and to his Service.

God heretofore required the first Fruits, and the Firstlings of the Flock, and the First-born of Children : *Abraham* rose early in the Morning to go and sacrifice his Son : and God commanded a never-dying Fire to be kept in his Temple, for the continual Sacrifice of the Morning as well as the Evening one. This signifies that God would be served first, and that our earliest Steps should be consecrated to him ; he would not have us say, *Come and follow me, if the World leaves any thing behind, that thou, O God, shalt have*. He can't endure those Folks that have the Insolence to say, *Suffer me first to go and bury, &c.* He answers them, *Go, let the dead bury their dead, come thou and follow me*. For he that lays his hands upon the Plow, and then looks back, is not fit for the Kingdom of God.

There are no People in the World of any Age, that do not in good earnest own, that it is necessary, once in one's Life, to think upon God ; and the Dispute is only about *the Time*, and not *the Thing*. Some say, *I will become a good*

a good Christian, when I have built my House; and others, when I have made my Fortune; and the younger when I am old, and have tasted all the Pleasures of this Life. All, in a Word, remit this Matter to the Time to come. Now since 'tis owned by all, that 'tis of absolute Necessity to give up one's self to God, and that without doing so, Hell and eternal Death are unavoidable, is it not the most extravagant Madness in the World, to remit an Affair of this Importance to the Time to come, for which no mortal Man can answer? O Youth, thou Idolizer of Delights, wilt thou not avail thy self of the Example of that wretched rich Man in the Gospel, that said Over-night to his Soul, eat, drink, my Soul, and make good Chear, for thou hast many Goods laid up for many Years: and yet that very Night, his Soul, that was so ill advised, was called for? Who hath assured you, that you shall come to old Age? Or have you been treating with God, that whenever Death shall surprize you, he shall receive you to himself? If Death should meet you, covered with Sins, just coming from the Play or Ball, the Tavern and Debauch, or from a worse Place, do you think you shall have Right to say at Heaven-gates, Lord, Lord, open to us? No, he will answer you, Be gone, I know not who you are, ye workers of Iniquity. Then you will doubtless say, we have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and are not worthy to be call'd thy Sons, but pardon

don us, and impute all our Offences to our Youth. This will not do, God will not, in Favour of Youth, make void that unalterable Decree, *Nothing unclean shall enter into my holy City.*

The Jewish Doctors, who do not often say good Things, are used to say, *Remember thy God, and turn to him but one day before thou diest.* This is well said: Think then on God to Day, for, it may be, thou shalt die to Morrow. What is it that we do, for God's sake, when we dispose of Time to come, and say, To Morrow we will find out such and such Sports, and the Week following, we'll debauch; and we'll live at this Rate, till we are about fifty or sixty, and then we'll think of retiring, and giving the rest to God? We imitate those ambitious, visionary Princes, that, in Hopes of Conquering, do already share out Provinces, and bestow great Governments; they give what is none of theirs. To whom belongs the Time to come? To God undoubtedly, who keeps it, as it were in Cisterns, and lets it run out as seems good to him, and stops, or continues its Course as he pleases. And thus when we distribute Time to come, we give away God's Goods; at least we give and design to several Uses, that which as yet is none of ours, and it may be, never will. And this, according to the Maxims and Wisdom of the World, is the greatest Folly that can well be practised: 'Tis by an old Proverb call'd *selling the Lyon's and Bear's-Skin, before you have caught them.*

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But, since 'tis absolutely necessary to devote one's self to God, should we not do it, when 'tis easiest so to do? And I maintain, 'tis easier to love God and turn to him in one's Youth, than 'tis in old Age. This seems to be a Paradox, because in Youth the Blood is boiling, the Flesh vigorous, and Sin sticks to our Hearts and Entrails, and one takes most Delight in the Pleasures of the World. 'Tis true indeed, when once the Reins are let loose to Concupiscence in Youth, 'tis almost impossible to stop its Sallies and its Transports: We must drain its Forces, before we put an end to its Disorders. But when it has the Happiness to turn to God and Goodness, 'tis sure that it succeeds incomparably better there, than in old Age. Wherever Youth are carried, they are commonly carried with Violence and great Ardor. 'Tis the Temperament of their Age. And if they can but guide these first Kindlings, it will come to an excellent Zeal, and holy Fervour of Devotion; as they, who know how to manage the Rapidity and Force of Streams and Rivers dexterously, can make them turn great Mills, and Machines for the Use and Benefit of Man's Life. But on the contrary, Experience teaches us, that Devotion cools with Age, and that old People have a great deal to do, to heat and stir their Hearts, in the Exercises of Devotion. Their Souls are hardned as it were, and no more touched or moved with so much Ease as formerly



merly, because they are not tender as they were, and the Fire of Zeal seems to diminish with their natural Heat.

Whence come these Difficulties in the Work of Men's Conversions? Surely, there is not one but increases with Age. This Difficulty of thinking on God and Goodness comes certainly from a Custom and a Habit. Now Custom in Time becomes a Tyrant. It comes from the Devil, and when it hath once establish'd its Tyranny by long Possession, it is in Manner impossible to root it out. It comes alone at first, but in a little Time it is called Legion. And that Devil which one might have driven away with a—*Get thee behind me, Satan*, can now be neither cast out, by Prayer or Fasting; and the Difficulty comes from hence, that the Faculties are worn out, and the Soul hath lost its Strength, and is capable no more of undertaking such a vigorous Enterprize, as that of returning to God, and breaking with Sin. In a Word, it comes from hence, that God is weary of calling, and inviting, and offering his Grace and Mercy. 'Tis all past, his Patience is changed into a just Fury, which hath been so long abused.

But above all, let us consider, how powerful Habits of Debauchery and Luxury grow, when we permit them to take Rooting, and grow up to old Age. That young Plant, which with one Finger might have been pull'd up, becomes a Trunk of mighty thicknels, and strong enough

enough to withstand both Sword and Hatchet. This little Monster, the Love of Pleasure, that one might easily strangle when 'tis born, becomes so great and terrible in Time, that one dare not so much as attack or touch it. But Sins become not barely stronger by Age, but their Number also increases. They are like Snow-balls, that gain by every roll. They are Streams that swell and grow bigger, the farther they are from their Springs and Head. It had been easy at first to pass them on foot, but afterwards 'tis hard to swim them over. Now the number of Sins increasing, increases also the difficulty of Devotion and Conversion. We read in the Lives of the holy Fathers, that an Angel one Day, let an Hermit see, in Vision, a certain old Man cutting down Wood in a Forest, to make his Burthen up, and carry it away, but the Bundle being exceeding great, he found it was too heavy to lift up and lay upon his Back, and therefore throwing it on the Ground, he fell again to cutting new Boughs, and joined them to his others; after which he tried again to lift it up, but found it much more heavy than before. But still he let it down, and fell to cutting Boughs a-fresh, and did this several Times. The solitary Hermit wondring at the folly of the old Man, the Angel took him up, and said, — Mark well that Old Man, he is the Emblem of the Men of this World, that heap up Sins on Sins; then comes a Resolution to be good, and serve God, and some Attempts they

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they make towards it; but they quickly sink beneath the Burthen of their Sins; then they begin again to commit new Faults, as though the Burthen by increasing would grow lighter; and when they have carried their Disorders on a great way further, then comes a fresh desire of Devoting their selves to God; but the burthen of their Sins becomes much greater, and their raising their Souls up, consequently much more difficult. This Story was made for us; and against those wretched Men that consecrate their Youth to the Pleasures of this World, and remit the practice of Devotion, and the raising up their Souls to Heaven, to another Time.

St. *Austin* explaining the Story of *Lazarus's* Resurrection, asks why our Saviour used Sighs and Tears, and Prayers, and loud Cries to raise him up, which he had not used, in raising up other dead Men? Why 'twas, says he, because he had been dead four Days. Our Lord would hereby give us an Idea of the Difficulty that is found in the Conversion of a Sinner, when he is settled and confirmed in his Sins. The first Day, saith the Father, is the Day of Pleasure, when we relish Sin. The second, that of Consent; the third, of Love, and being fixed to the Delights of Sin; and the fourth, is that of Custom and Habit. When once the Man is there, he cannot be converted but by Cries and Tears, and the Voice of our Lord that worketh Wonders. This lets us see, methinks, the Interest we have, and the Necessity

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Necessity of thinking upon God betimes, and consecrating our first Years to Vertue and Devotion. I know very well, that the End obtains the Crown; but I know besides, that 'tis of mighty Importance to begin well, to the ending well. An Arrow that flies wide at first, when it goes out from the Bow, will be found at a mighty distance, before all its Force is at an end, from the designed Mark. A Man, who in his Youth plunges himself into Debauchery, and gives himself wholly up to sensual Pleasures, will find himself, at a mighty distance from God, in his old Age, and will have much to do, to bring himself into the right Way. And therefore I conclude with the wise Man, *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*

## MEDITATION.

*Why dost thou, O my Soul, defer, after such Considerations as these? Dost thou not find the necessity of consecrating thy self without delay, to the service of thy God? Thou criest continually, to morrow, to morrow, but that to morrow never comes, and the Day of thy separation from thy Body, will come when least thou lookest for it. When God calls, thou sayst unto him, as the Sluggard says, presently, presently, let me alone a while, a little while, but this presently never comes, and this little while endures continually, as saith St. Austin: I see very well, that 'tis grievous to thee to be obliged to give thy self thus early unto God. 'Tis too soon*



thou sayst, to begin, and would it not be time enough some years hence? *Ab wretched and ingrateful Soul, canst thou too soon think on thy God? Thou canst not think on him, so soon as he hath thought on thee: Sure 'tis but just, that thou shouldst think on him, as soon as thou beginnest to know thy self, since he hath thought on thee and thy Salvation, from all Eternity. His Essence never had Beginning, no nor his Love to thee; they both of them have been from Everlasting. What hadst thou done to oblige him to love thee before time was? He loved thee before thou wert, and before thou wast amiable. He saw thee in thy Nothing, and in the Abyss of thy Corruption, and hath from all Eternity prepared means to pluck thee out of it. He hath designed thee for Glory, and prepared thee a Saviour and Redeemer. He hath not then reserved to himself a moment in Eternity, which he hath not bestowed on thee, and thou wouldst cut off from him, a great many Years of that uncertain short Life, of which thou hast the use but whilst he pleases. It may be, thou wilt say, that 'twere not unjust thy Time should be divided betwixt God and thee, but sure 'tis very hard to give it all away without reserving any thing to one's self. But thou considerest not, 'tis God that gives thee every thing. The Heavens, and Earth, the Fields, the Rivers, Floods, Plants, Trees, and Fruits, and hath kept nothing to himself. Has he not given thee all himself, his only Son, and that to suffer Death for thee? Wouldst thou not therefore be ingrateful, O my Heart, if thou shouldst think to divide with God, and take from him, any thing thou hast? But *Ab, my Soul, when thou thinkest,*  
and*

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and talkest at this rate, thou understandest but ill thy Interest. Thou presupposest that thou lovest from thy self, whatever time thou givest to thy God; and only savest the hours thou devoteest to thy self; all the rest is thrown away, and lost in the vast Abyss of Time past. But the Moments thou bestowest on God, are laid up in store, and thou shalt find them safe, they will appear before thee, and be put in the great Account, at the day of Judgment, and thou shalt receive for them an Eternity of Glory. Stick then no longer, defer no more, my Soul, the renouncing to all Pleasures, and all hopes of this World, to follow after God. There is in him the source and spring of Life, and in his light thou shalt see light, and be fill'd with the good things of his House; and drink, as out of a River of Delights. Then, in thy Age, thou never wilt regret the loss of thy youth; thy days will not be brought to rise in Judgment up against thee, to condemn thee, when thou beginnest to grow down and near the Grave. The thinking on thy God will cause no terror in thee, thou wilt not look upon him as a Judge, that will come and demand an Account of so many years consum'd in vain Pleasures, but as a great Deliverer that comes to break thy Chains, and as a Rewarder, that comes to bring thee days of Refreshment, for all the sorrowful and painful years that thou hast passed in this World.

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PRAYER.

## P R A Y E R.

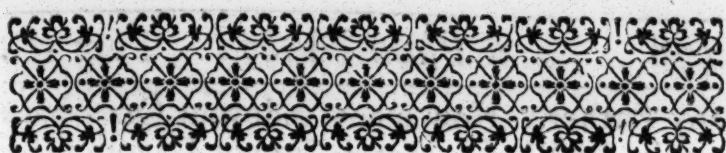
O God, conductor of my youth, light of the blind, teacher of the ignorant, enlightner of the dark and simple, that bringest back the wanderers into the true way, and perfectest praises from the mouths of babes and sucklings; teach me thy ways, and draw me from the ways of this world. Hast thee, O God, that I may hasten towards thee, and leave me no longer in the world and sin. My Lord, and my God, infuse thy Grace into my soul, that my heart may desire thee, that in desiring, it may seek after thee, that seeking, it may find thee, that finding, it may love thee, and in that love, may find its sovereign joy and happiness. It is a great while since I consumed away in vain desires; I have a mind to come unto thee, but I find not strength to vanquish those ill habits in which I am engaged by custom. Come then, my God, and snatch me from the arms of pleasure, suffer no longer my delays, and when I say to thee, yet a little while, O wait a little longer; then draw me by thy powerful word, and say, Awaken thou that sleepest, and raise thee from the dead, and Jesus Christ shall give thee light. If words are not strong and loud enough to raise me, touch thou the bier, strike on the body, in which my soul is buried.

ried ; 'tis its cradle or its tomb, there it sleeps,  
 or there 'tis dead: Sensual pleasures either  
 stupify or kill it quite ; strike on this body  
 then, that its soul may awake, for it is better  
 that I enter into life with one eye, than hav-  
 ing two, be cast into Hell-fire. 'Tis better  
 that my flesh should suffer here below some  
 pains, and that my soul should taste hereafter  
 those endless joys thou hast prepar'd for it  
 above. I dwell in Sodom, and I like my  
 dwelling : Thou wouldst fain send thy An-  
 gels to deliver me from thence, thy word  
 and ministers to bring me out, before that  
 day of terror comes, in which thou wilt pour  
 down upon the cursed world, torrents of fire  
 and brimstone. But I am always finding  
 out excuses to defer my going forth. O  
 pluck me therefore by thy hand, withdraw me  
 by the power of thy Grace, that I perish not  
 together with the wicked. Shew me the way  
 unto thy holy hill, that I may save my self,  
 and that being out of danger, I may look  
 back and see these deluges of Corruption that  
 overflow the country, and the torrents of thy  
 vengeance, that lay the world in ruins.  
 Alas, my God, had it but pleased thee to  
 have let me taste the spiritual delights of thy  
 love, I should not be so sensible to the plea-  
 sures of this world, and should not stay so  
 long from seeking thee ; for I desire most



earnestly and truly to be happy. If then I had but understood my felicity to have been in thee, I should have flown unto thee to have sought it. O Lord, since pleasure is the only loadstone to attract my soul, make me to taste a little of that joy, that I should find in thee, and let me feel thy infinite Goodness in my heart, that I may run without delay after thee, and pant with the desires and longings of a hart, after the living brooks, to quench the violent thirst with which I burn.





T H E  
THIRD PART.

*Of the Helps that lead to  
Devotion.*



C H A P. I.

*The first general Advice, to Will,  
Desire, and Ask it.*



WE have seen from how many Sources Indevotion rises; let us now try to vanquish these Difficulties by such Counsels that may lead us to Devotion; Those that I will give hereupon, are either General or Particular. But before I pass any farther, I must presuppose, that he whom I would carry to Devotion, must be very willing himself to go. He that is not so disposed, may e'en stop where he is, for 'twill be to no purpose to pass any

any farther. How many indevout Ones have we in the World, that desire not Devotion for themselves, and that despise it in all others? And yet there are some of this Sort that are persuaded they have a Religion. I am, say they, it may be, as Religious as another, although I mock at all Devotion, and devout People. If they believe what they say, they are certainly cheated by their own Hearts, and we must own, these Men are truly profane. Others there are, that esteem Devotion in others, but care not for it in themselves; it cannot accomodate it self to the Spirit of the World, which these Men idolize; they approve Devotion, and admire it, but for their own parts, they think they may be saved with less trouble. I know not which are best, these or the others, but that these, I think, are somewhat nearer the Disposition I would have; but alas, their Conscience is but yet in a very bad Condition! They are in this worse than the others, that they sin against their Sense and Light, they know their Master's Will, but do it not. They are afraid of doing too much, and, provided they may be saved, they are not much concerned. How, strange Fancy! deserves not Paradise to be purchas'd at the rate of Tears, and Prayers, and some Hours of Humiliation? How can we think of gaining Heaven at the lowest Price, since 'tis so difficultly to be gotten at any? *If the Righteous shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?* Believe ye, O you Luke-warm,

warm Souls, that a true devout One has not too much Righteousness, to smoothe his way to Heaven? Know ye not that all the World commends that saying of *St. Austin*, *Woe to the best of mens lives, if examin'd without mercy!* and that of *David*, *If thou Lord, shouldst be extreme to mark what is done amiss, who may abide it!* And if these true devout Men have not too much Righteousness, you certainly will be found wanting, you who lag so far behind: But God, you say, will supply what is wanting, and 'tis for that that Christ died, to wit, to perfect his Grace amidst our Sins and Infirmities. But how do you know that Jesus Christ will do this? Does he not bestow this Grace when and where he pleases? You ought therefore to take the surest side. What assurance have you, that God gives his Grace in that Manner, to those that despise it? Do you what possibly you can, God's Mercy will have enough to do, and your Righteousness, though carried as far as all your Strength will bear you, will have need enough of Help and Aid, to your attaining to his Glory.

Others there are, that are a step nearer to Devotion, and that is all; they would willingly enough have this (what d'ye call it,) Devotion? But they are not arriv'd so far as to the desiring it, that is, the Motions of their Wills to it, are very lame and imperfect. I would be Devout, they cry, but I can't; the World carries me off, my Affairs take me up, my Temper and my Mind are not made for it, they



they have not that Turn that's necessary to the practice of this Vertue: I do that which I would not, and I do not that which I would, for the Law of my Members rules over the Law of my Understanding. But they are not much troubled at not having what they desire, and that's a certain Proof that they desire it very weakly. O how far are Consciences in this Estate, from Perfection! This is not to love God with *all the heart*, but to seek him by halves, and desire him very imperfectly. To desire Devotion at this rate, is to take the way never to obtain it, for the Soul surmounts these Difficulties only by stiffly standing up against them, and acting with all its vigour: Judge, if a Heart thus cowardly and cold, can obtain even any Thing that is difficult in this World. We have seen how many mighty Passions ruin and destroy Devotion, the Love of the World, its Pleasures, and its Troubles and Perplexities; if to these violent Passions you oppose none but a few imperfect languid Wishes, 'twill be like a Combat betwixt Dwarfs and mighty Giants.

The first Advice therefore, that I give for the obtaining Devotion, is to *desire it earnestly*. You will say, perhaps, that this is not necessary, since they who so desire it have it already. There are Movements of which we are not Masters, and oftentimes we passionately wish for something that we cannot do, though it depends upon our own Will. The Tyranny of Habits is very terrible, and the Bonds

Bonds of Sin are hard to break. *St. Austin* sets forth these Movements of a Soul; that would raise it self to God, but cannot, in a heavenly Manner. O my God, I sigh'd and breath'd after the liberty of thinking upon nothing but on thee, but I sigh'd and breath'd when I was then held fast, not by another's Chains and Bonds; but by my own Will, that was harder than any Iron. The Devil kept me in his power, he made a Chain and linked me in it. O fain I would have serv'd thee with a Love all pure, and have enjoyed my God, in whom alone true solid Joys are to be found, but this new Will, that did but just bud out, was not able to overpower the old one, that was strengthened in its Evils by long Habits. This is the true Picture of a Christian Soul, that desires indeed to be Devout, and would fain think on nothing else but God, and love him only, but alas cannot. But such a Soul is near Devotion yet, and near to Happiness: When one seeks after God, one is just upon the finding him. It is this hunger and thirst after Righteousness, to which our Lord assures a blessed Satisfaction and Fulfilling: These Desires are the effects of Grace, and if Nature does nothing in vain, much less does Grace: These Desires cannot be still in vain, they shall obtain their End, they shall one Day be satisfied. There is hardly any Thing but the vigour of a Soul, and the force of strong Desires, shall some Time or other compass; it was by this way, rather than the force of Arms, that *Alexander* overcame the World, vanquish'd

vanquish'd so many Kingdoms, took so many Cities, and gain'd so many Battles. When all Things necessary to the accomplishing his Designs failed him, the vigour of his Courage, that is to say, the force of his Desires, stood him in every Thing beside; and if Desires can do no such mighty Matters on Things that are without, and independent on our Wills, what can they not effect on that which dependeth on our selves, and is no other Thing but our Will it self?

And that these good Desires may be successful, we must call on God for his help. They are the Children he hath brought forth himself, and is concerned to feed and nourish them. 'Tis the Morning of that Sun, that fails not to shine out full, if we but call upon him ardently. This therefore is another Advice that naturally follows the foregoing one; we must ask of God the Grace of Devotion, and sigh before him, that we have it not. If there be any answering Vows and Prayers, if there be any Gift that comes immediately from Heaven, it is this Vertue; for there is nothing purer, nor more elevated among all the Christian Vertues. *Dost thou want Wisdom, saith St. James, ask it of God, who giveth to all, and upbraideth none.* And I know not if there be any Thing or Part of Christian Wisdom more desirable than this. We ask of God our daily Bread, our Food and Raiment, Health of Body, and cure of Sicknes, and ease of all our Evils; but the Soul is very sick, and very poor,

poor, and ready to starve and die for want of Devotion, which is its Fire, its Soul and its Life. In a word, there is nothing to which we can more certainly apply the Promise of St. James, *That God refuseth none, but gives to all men liberally*; for that's the Prayer of the World, that pleases him best, since it tends to his Glory and our own Salvation. We desire of God, that he would come into Us, that we also may dwell in Him, and by this mutual Tie be perfectly united. And how should not this be pleasing to God, since our Lord Jesus Christ, the Model of our Actions and our Thoughts, hath asked it already for us? Let me be in them, and thou in me, that we may be united all in one.

We should have begun our Advices there; and so the good Man should begin his Work there; for if we can do nothing without God, which has no respect or relation to him, how should we do without him, what immediately depends and terminates upon Him?

## M E D I T A T I O N.

*I consult with my Heart, to know if I can say with any truth; My Soul longeth after thy Courts; and as the Hart panteth after the Water-Brooks, so longeth my Soul after thee, O God. My Soul gaspeth after thee as a thirsty Land, saying, Oh when shall I enter in, and appear before the Presence of God! But alas, I find no such Thoughts as these within me;*



me; I find there a great dryness, and a general privation of the Graces of Heaven; there I find only some few languishing Desires, that die as soon as they are born. My Faith is wavering, my Charity is cold, my Hope is weak, my Zeal is half extinguished, and my Devotion lukewarm. Awake then, O my Soul, to Day, if thou wouldst be united to thy God, if thou wouldst love and be beloved of him; if thou wouldst have him kindle in thee the pure Flames of Devotion, thou must desire it, and must ask it earnestly. This good, this great good, will very well deserve, that thou shouldst move the first, and try to get before him; Say not, my Heart, that thou art bound by thy accursed Chains, and that thy Flesh and Blood calls thee still back, and persuades thee otherwise; that thou wouldst fain be good, but canst not; that thou desirest it this moment, but canst not desire it long. Alas, my Soul, if thou wert thus willing, the thing would be done; the Chains of thy will are voluntary Chains; thy Bonds are evil habits and engagements of Corruption, that are so far from extenuating thy fault, that they increase it. In these kind of things one does all that one will, and when one does not so, it is because we will it with an imperfect Will.

## P R A Y E R.

O my good Father, and my merciful Saviour! I know too well that I am not truly devout, because I would not be so. But oh, however voluntary the bonds are that tie my will to evil, and particularly to indevo-

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tion, they are nevertheless strong, and nevertheless indissoluble. My corruption is in my will, and therefore I cannot vanquish it by my will only: Thy Grace is sufficient, but without it I can do nothing. Come then come, my Deliverer, break thou these chains under whose weight I groan. I will not let thee go before thou blestest me. Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right Spirit within me. Let the Spirit of liberty support me; 'twould be to little purpose to seek for aid and counsel, to help my devotion without thee; without thee all designs must want success, all counsels signify just nothing. Except thou keepest the city and the house, the watchman waketh but in vain, and all our Labours are to little purpose. Hear my Prayers, O my God, and let my Meditations bring forth fruit; animate thy holy word, by the help of thy holy Spirit, that it may kindle in my heart the fire of zeal; and I may quickly be delivered from those wretched coldnesses that trouble and torment me, and may be filled with devotion as full as I desire and wish to be.

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C H A P.

## C H A P. II.

*The second general Advice to lead a holy  
Life in the Practice of all Virtue.*

**W**E have already said something of the Necessity of living well, to the becoming truly devout; but the Subject is of too great Importance to stop there. Let us then consider, that there can be no stricter Union, than that betwixt God and a faithful Soul, in Acts of Devotion: 'Tis Head to Head, if I may so speak, 'tis a secret Commerce, 'tis seeing God Face to Face, and speaking to him as a Man speaks to his Friend: All that can be conceived of the Union betwixt Man and his Wife, Father and Son, Body and Member, is not yet strong enough to represent the Union of a Soul, that is flying to Heaven on the Wings of Faith and Hope, and to which God hath discovered the inestimable Treasures of his Grace, God enters into her, and she into God, and they are but one Whole. But he that sees not it is necessary to purify himself as God is pure, to even and smooth his Way to Heaven, sees nothing as he should. The Light of Heaven suffers no Dawn, that is to say, Mixture of Day and Night. God who is all Light, cannot unite with a Soul that is in Darkness and Obscurity.

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If there be any Vertue to which we owe the blessed Spirit's Presence with us, 'tis Devotion. Now we know sufficiently what 'tis that can obtain this blessed Spirit's Presence. 'Tis not the Magnificence of the House, but the Cleanness; When the wicked Spirit is gone forth of the House, and at his return finds it swept and garnished, he is ashamed, and cannot enter in again, without the Help of six more Spirits, worser than the first. That which drives the wicked Spirit away, draws thither the holy One, who never makes our Heart his Temple, but when all Filthiness is banish'd thence. When *Moses* had hewn and polish'd the two Tables, God then engraved his Commandments on them. A Painter cleans his Cloth be sure before he draws his Prince's Picture. We have two fleshly Tables of our Heart, the Understanding, and the Will; but we must not hope that God will write his Laws, or the Holy Ghost draw out his Image there, unless it first be cleans'd and polish'd. Devout and pious Soul, that desirest to see God dwelling in Thee, and his Love within thy Heart, cleanse the Table of thy Understanding, from so many Errors, Prejudices, and vain Imaginations, and evil Thoughts; and cleanse the Table of thy Will, from so many criminal Inclinations and vicious Habits. And when these Tables are become white Blanks, God will undoubtedly come down, and grave his Image in them.



Devotion is an Entry into God's Closet; and without the Wedding Garment is no entering there; if one is not adorned with Faith, and Hope, and Charity; if one is not cloathed with the Lord Jesus, and Bowels of Mercy, and the Spirit of Patience, and Righteousness and Innocence. Devotion is an Exaltation of Soul, and Sins are Clogs and Weights; if we oppress this Soul with Weights, how shall it raise it self? We must therefore discharge our Hearts to Day of one, and to Morrow of another Sin. One Day we must acquit it of Avarice; another, we must set upon Pride; next Day Ambition: And thus thy Heart will be disingag'd and thy Devotion be at Liberty. But above all, we must remember that the Heart is the most delicate and tender Thing to deal with in the World; and nothing must be done to put it in Disorder; we must take it down gently, and set it safe again with abundance of Care and Pains. 'Tis the Eye of the Soul, and every little Mote of Dust is sufficient to put it almost out: 'Tis as Milk that is turn'd and corrupted by the Motion of the Air: 'Tis as a Lute that is put out of Tune even by the unevenness of the Weather. True Sanctification hath more Parts than a Lute has Strings; and this Holiness of Heart is ruined by any one Part disordered, as one false Sound quite Spoils the Harmony of all the Consort; and therefore we must look to it, and every Part of it with all the Care and Tenderness imaginable. The

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The Soul is like a Sea, and its Passions are like Winds; if we keep not in these Passions they will raise up terrible Storms and Tempests in this Sea, in whose loud Noise, Devotion which is a peaceable and gentle Virtue never will be heard. Each Passion will transport the Heart along with it, and poor Devotion a Stranger and alone by it self, will never recover it again. There is most certainly a very near Alliance between Words and Actions; they come from the same Source, and the same Heart produces them. Therefore I think a Man cannot better dispose his Mouth to sing God's Praises, his Mind to contemplate on his wondrous Works, and his Soul to elevate and raise it self, than by the Practice of good Works. We have before said, that a Man is ill dispos'd for Works of Devotion, that is just come from a Ball or Comedy. I say, now on the other Hand, that when a Man is come from the House of Mourning, where he hath comforted the afflicted, succoured the miserable, supported the weak, fed the needy, and rescued the oppressed; he finds himself so gay, and so dispos'd to Prayer and Praise, that 'tis not easily to be conceiv'd. He comes to God with the Sprightlinels and Comfort, that a Servent comes with to his Master for the Reward he promis'd him, when he had done his Duty; for though he acknowledges he can merit nothing of God's Hand, yet knows very well that God rewardeth that in us, which we could never have done without  
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the Assistance of his Grace. He comes to God's Altar with the Assurance of a faithful Subject, approaching his Prince with Presents he is sure will make him way to his Favour. For though our best Works are but very imperfect Gifts, and have even all that is good in them from his Liberality, yet he knows that God accepts them as though they were of great Price. I will not make any Difficulty to say, that both the Ancient and the Modern Ones who have distinguished the Christian active Life from the Contemplative, and have believed that this surpassed that, and was much more excellent than the Contemplative, I will not stick to say, they are greatly mistaken. For in separating the active Life, which consists in doing Good to one's Neighbour, and practising Charity towards the miserable and needy, from the Contemplative Life to which they beliv'd they might wholly give themselves up, they have undoubtedly deprived their Devotion of a great Help. I have already confessed that the Employments of *Martha*, which respect the bodily Service of our Lord Jesus Christ himself and of his Members, should not take up that Time that is devoted to the Works of *Mary*, that is, to Meditation, Reading and Prayers. But we have time enough for all: When *Mary* hath heard enough, it is but fit, that she should take her Sister *Martha's* Place. Therefore I would not counsel him, that would attain to perfect Devotion, to renounce that Part of the World  
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that is made up of the afflicted Members of our Lord. 'Tis the School of Vertue and Piety; and the Practice of Works of Mercy and Compassion is so far from distracting devout Souls, that 'tis the shortest and the surest Way to arrive at Devotion by. The Ideas of the World, I own, are incompatible with those that should fill a devout Soul; a sad Event, some noble Sight, the Hopes of a Fortune for your self, the greatest of anothers, a Combat, a War; all these, I say, and the like, have no Alliance with the sweet Images of God, his Love, and Benefits, and Favour; and therefore it is good to shut the Door at first to these Ideas, if you would labour with Success in the establishing others; but the Images of one that languishes, or suffers for God's sake, are easily reconciled with the Image of our Saviour suffering for us. And Multitude of Poor, on whom thou openest thy Bowels, will quickly lead thee to the Consideration of the bounteous Liberality that thou receivest from God. The Help thou lendest any one, to defend his Life, or another his Honour, will oblige thee to remember the Benefits and Succours thou receivest continually from Heaven. Thou never wilt have need to banish the Thoughts of this Nature, that follow the active Life, to lodge in their Room, those that arise from Contemplation; they will unite in the same Heart, and lend each other mutual Aids.



## MEDITATION.

I have been often told, that the *Vertues* are *Sisters*, that all of them go hand in hand; that they are as so many *Rings* of a blessed *Chain*, that is broken as soon as one of them is lost. They cannot be alone one from the other; and therefore, my *Soul*, thou canst not be truly devout, because thou art only truly *Vertuous*, and takest not to heart the *Practise* of good *Works*. Dost thou not see the *World* is made expressly on purpose to furnish matter for the exercise of all thy *Vertues*, and to sollicite thee to good and holy *Actions*? The heavens declare the glory of *God*, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work, That thou mightest join thy voice in *Consort*, with those praises that all nature sings, and by which thou makest thy *Acknowledgments*. The *Air* forms storms and tempests, thunders, and lightnings, to create in thee the fear of *God*, and make thee tremble under his hand, who makes the *Mountains* shake. Dost thou not see, that *God* makes some men miserable in this *World*, that they may be the objects of thy *Pity*; poor, that thou mayest be liberal; afflicted, that thou mayest comfort them; weak, that thou mayest strengthen them; and sick, that thou mayest visit them? Does he not even suffer men to sin, and wander from the way, that thou mayest set them right again; ignorant, that thou mayest instruct them; imprudent, that thou mayest advise; some to fall, that thou mayest raise them up again, and look to thy own steps; and even some wretched ones that suffer much, nay perish, that thou mayest

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be possessed with a saving fear? Does he not suffer examples of *Vanity*, that thou mayst despise the *World*; sudden, unlook'd for Deaths, that thou mayst watch and be upon thy guard; proud men to fall to ruin, that thou mayst still be kept humble; the wicked to be punish'd, that thou mayst abhor *Vice*; and good men rewarded, that thou mayst seek and follow after *Virtue*? And amidst so many Lessons, thou art quite deaf and unconcern'd; thou makest thy *Virtue*, O my Soul, consist in doing nothing ill, that is, in doing nothing; as if one should make life consist in death, and a privation of motion. Thou callest not to mind that the barren Fig-tree is cut off at the root, and that God will cast out the unprofitable Servant, and banish out of *Paradise* both the Servant that shall have lost his Talent, and him that only wrapp'd it up in a Napkin.

## P R A Y E R.

Come then, my God and Saviour, come and cultivate this heart, that it no longer be a barren rock, and stony field; soften this rock, by the showers of thy grace; bless this field, and make it fertile in the fruits of Life. Let my hands distil down myrrh, and my fingers precious spices; let them be always open to the poor; let my feet run to succour the distress'd; my ears receive with greediness thy word and praises; my tongue continually celebrate thy glorious name, and carry my thanks unto the  
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clouds. O holy spirit, principle of all good motions, breathe Life into me, be the soul of my soul, that it may be no longer buried in the tomb of vice and sleep, but act most powerfully; let it be enkindled with the fire of charity, and let that fire not leave it a moment in peace and without action, that by continual practising of good works, I may be dispos'd to devotion, and union with thee, my God, who art the object of my love: that by this purity I may more and more invite him who is the author and giver of every good gift, to come and make me partaker of the flames of zeal and true devotion.

### CHAP. III.

*The Third general Advice, for the Help of Devotion; to guard the Senses, and keep the Soul as it were lock'd up.*

**T**H E R E is so great a Commerce betwixt the Heart and Senses, that one shall try in vain to guard the one, if he does not also guard the other. The Heart is the House, the Senses are the Gates and Windows: 'Tis by them the Devil enters in and seizes on our Souls. This Enemy plants as many Batteries without as we have outward Senses, and if we escape at one Port, he kills us at another.

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But this we must say, to discharge the Senses, that they are rather miserable than criminal, they act as they are made to act, or rather suffer according to the Laws of the Creator; and even the greatest Part of Ideas that come to them are Innocent, and are only spoiled by coming to the Heart. The Beauty of a Woman, the Lustre of Gold and Jewels, the Sweetness of Musick, &c. are the Works of God, and consequently good, but the Heart corrupts those innocent Images. However, because the Heart cannot empoison any other Objects but such as are presented to it, one should remove from it all Matters and Occasions of its Crimes, and ill Habits would undoubtedly be destroyed for want of Employ. And therefore 'tis of absolute Necessity, to keep a watchful Guard over the Senses. *I made a Covenant with mine Eyes, said holy Job, that they should not behold a Maid.* It hath always been the Practice of such as would be truly devout, to keep their Souls shut in from the Multitude of Objects, that surround them on all Hands. 'Tis true, they have carried up this Maxim to the greatest Superstition imaginable. Some have betaken themselves to the Desarts, that they might see nothing: Others have lock'd themselves up in Cells, never to go out; and History tells us, of a Solatory of Egypt, that would never so much as give his own Sister the Satisfaction of seeing him; at last he received Order from his Superior, at the Prayers of Saint Athanasius,



to go and visit her: Thither he came, and with his Eyes shut, presented himself before her, and saw her not, but said, *Come satisfy thy self quickly and see me*, and so departed. These Excesses do more Injury to Reason, than they afford Help to Devotion. The Soul draws great Advantages from the Senses, when it can make right Use of them. To shut up all Avenues by which Understanding and Knowledge pass into the Soul, is to keep it in a dark Prison, and feed it with Ignorance. The Truth is this, 'tis dangerous to let it out to evil Objects, because thereby 'tis tainted, and but ill dispos'd for Piety and Devotion. And 'tis no less dangerous to let it out too much on indifferent Objects, because this dissipates and weakens its Strength, and it still brings back with it an Air of Vanity from the Objects it has long dwelt upon.

This is the Way of living in the World; we are visited, and make Returns, we are expos'd to Conversation, that is to say, the Contagion that comes from every Thing and Place. The Eyes are always open to let in new Objects, the Ears to hear News, our Conversations are all of them vain, we say a thousand silly and impertinent Things, and many more bad, than good or indifferent: One entertains you with a Discourse of dressing and adjusting, and another with some trifling Intrigue of the Neighbourhood; another fills your Breast with Slanders and Backbitings; another shews you his fine House, and

and a new Building: One comes a Traveller, and he tells Stories of the new World, and enlarges with Lies and Wonders of his own making, and you return to your Houses with your Heads fill'd with Rattles and Fooleries. And when you would enter your Closets, your Hearts are but ill dispos'd for the Duties of that Place. And therefore 'tis harder to be devout, in great and frequented Cities, where one cannot lightly hinder these Kinds of Amusements. I advise therefore the faithful Soul to keep it self reserv'd: The Souls of Worldlings are like frequented high Streets, open to all Comers and Goers, and one is always in a Crowd, and Devotion, that loves to be private and still, is not at all pleas'd in these publick Places. They are common Inns where all Strangers are entertained, and the Master often forc'd to lie out. But the Hearts of the Faithful should be private to themselves, and God that is the Master should be there at large. *A Garden enclosed is my Sister, my Spouse, a Spring shut up, a Fountain sealed*, says Jesus Christ to his Spouse, that is, to every Christian Soul. Shut this Garden, if thou wouldst preserve the Flowers and Fruits, and suffer not thy clean Springs to be muddied by impure unclean Beasts. Temples and Oratories should not be accessible to the Profane. Our Hearts are the Temples of the Holy Ghost; let us shut the Gates then, to a thousand indiscreet Ideas, and a thousand vain Objects that would profane them. The Soul is like a Vessel that

Grace fills full with sweet Odours, but if we give it too much Air, they all evaporate, and leave it scentless and insipid. When a Vessel is full, it can receive no more, without losing something of what it had before. If it is full of Devotion, and we carry it into the World, as it fills with Vanities, so that which was good in it evaporates and goes out. This is a Truth that we should often think on, that every time we go out, as it were, into the World, we lose something we had: *Dinah* would needs go out and see the Daughters of the Country, but there she lost her loveliest Ornament, her Honour and Virginity: But let us especially remember, that in seeking out innocent Objects, we often find criminal Ones: the Devil lies in Ambush every where, and hath strowed his Nets with Flowers: Sin reigns in every Place, so that let us go astray never so little, we undoubtedly meet with it, and 'tis very much, if it is not always to our cost. But what shall we say of those, that go with settled Purpose and Designs, to Places where they know Sin reigns, and Satan triumphs? After having lost half their Day in preparing for the Play-house, they give the Devil the other half, and plunge themselves into Hell: These are People that are wilful Murderers of their Souls, for which God will require a most exact and terrible Account. I conclude all this, that a devout Person should be very reserv'd from the World, should make and receive but few Visits, and  
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break themselves as they well can, of the vain Curiosity of knowing all that passes. 'Tis enough for a good Soul, to know what passes in its own Heart, and to order its Thoughts and Motions. What signifies it, to learn, what becomes of such a Fleet, what was the event of such a Battle, how such a Negotiation succeeded, how the Treaty of Peace and Preparations of War go on? The Knowledge of all this makes a Man no whit the happier. But the Ideas of these Things that stick in his Memory, will not fail to make an Irruption on his Heart, and disturb him in the midst of his Devotions.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

*How happy wilt thou be, my Soul, when thou shalt be in a place, where thou shalt have nothing to fear; where thou mayst take thy flight, walk out, and wander where thou wilt, fly over an infinity of Objects, and give thy self intirely up to contemplation, and diversity of thoughts! This happiness will be thine, when thou shalt come to Heaven. There every Object will declare thy Duty, and sollicit thy Obedience. There thou wilt fear no longer Snakes under the Flowers, nor that the Devil lies in ambuscade in those blest places, whither thy mind and steps will carry thee. Thy Soul enlarged, shall fear no farther dissipation, or waste of strength, it shall embrace all Objects, without the fear of being over-run. And thou shalt be filled with an Infinity of very different Images, yet shall not God be less within thee, for all those Images shall be holy ones,*



and Friends of God. Now 'tis not so, thou canst not take one step, without incurring danger; thou canst not stir from home, nor from thy self, but thou must meet an Enemy, that seeks for and demands thy death and ruin: Thou canst not admit into thy breast, these numerous Objects that crowd in at thy Senses, but thou must fill thy heart therewith, and take from God the room that he alone should fill and take up. Make not therefore so many sallies into the World, for thou wilt still lose something by it. Include thy self within the compass of thine own heart, if it is not large 'tis deep, and thou wilt there find exercise enough. Thou wilt never be able to sound it, it cannot be known by any but by him that tries the very thoughts and reins. But dive at least as deep as well thou canst. Examine thou thy self, and the knowledge of that which passes within thee, will be of more use, than of all that passes in the World besides. Concern not thy self with the Wars and Intrigues of State, with publick or with private Matters. Take cognizance of the Wars and the Strifes within, of thy Flesh and Spirit, betwixt the Law of thy Members, and that of thy Understanding. Pacify those Differences, teach the Flesh to be subject, replace thy Reason on its Throne, and give it Piety for its chief Counsellor, tame thy Appetite, and bring thy Passions under Bondage. Put this thy little State in good order, govern wisely and holily that great People in this little Kingdom; that is, the multitude of Affections, Thoughts, Opinions, and Passions, that are in thy Heart.

PRAYER.

## P R A Y E R.

**O** thou, my God, that governeſt this world; that not only holdeſt in the waters of the Sea from overflowing of this earth, but reſtrain'eſt alſo the malice of wicked men from overturning the world; thou, who by thy profound wiſdom ruleſt all things, who draweſt light from out of darkneſs; preſide thou over the motions of my heart, and draw out light from that dark chaos. Take thou the reins, and lead my ſoul, and ſuffer it not to ſtray and wander out, and to loſe it ſelf in errors. Stop the ſtream of its paſſions, and the fury of its motions, that it may recollect it ſelf within it ſelf, and labour in its own affairs, and think of preparing room for thee, and of retaining thee, and wholly poſſeſſing thee; to contemplate upon nothing elſe, but vaniſh all other ideas; and by theſe means diſpoſe it ſelf for the exerciſes of devotion.

C H A P.

## C H A P. IV.

*The Fourth General Advice; to persevere in Holy Exercises, and not to be discouraged at any Difficulties.*

WE have not represented Devotion, as a Thing lightly to be obtain'd: And therefore a good Soul must not be surpriz'd when it meets with Difficulties, much less, must it be discouraged and lose heart: This is a new Advice I give to obtain it. Every good Soul has had experience, that in trying to raise it self to God, it hath found the Wings of its Devotion either entangled with the Vanities of the World, or by the Sluggishness of the Flesh: In this Estate, if it relax or give back, 'tis lost; it must, to these so necessary Desires, add Action and Courage: *Solomon*, in his *Proverbs*, speaks of the motion of the Sluggard, as if all his Strength were spent and drained in vain and fruitless Wishes and Desires; he makes the finest Resolutions in the World, but he never stirs from the Place he is in. And *Solomon* may well mean the sluggishness of the Soul hereby, for there is hardly a Chapter in which he does not hit it very home: This is the Vice of those who exhaust themselves quite, in praising Vertue, so that they have no Strength left to pursue and attain

tain to it. The false Devout ones do the same ; they praise it and desire it, but the first Temptation that meets them, utterly confounds and throws them down. But dost thou not know, that all great Things are hard to come by ? Does a Pilot forsake his Vessel, at the first rude gust of Wind ? A Rower that makes against the Stream, does he not set himself with resolution against the fury of the Current ? He still makes on, takes Courage, and at last surmounts the Difficulty. A Tradesman leaves not off his Calling for one Loss, nor a Courtier his Hopes, for one shrewd turn of Fortune ; but all of them try to regain by their Diligence, what they lost by Disgrace or Ill-luck : And so should we set ourselves strongly against Indevotion ; and when we find our Hearts but ill-disposed, and our Motions languishing, and our Devotions crossed and distracted, we must do violence to ourselves, and check our Hearts, till we have brought them to their Duty again. We must pray, read, meditate, and think, in spight of its Teeth. *Although, says St. Basil, The Devil fill your heart with evil Thoughts, yet you must not for that leave the exercise of Prayer. You must make new efforts, and greater yet ; you must pray to God that it would please him, to break down the thick Wall of vain Thoughts that hold us separate from him, we must ask of him, that our Souls may quickly come to him, without being hindred by any vain and wicked Thoughts, or Objects : And though the Enemy should come again with a reinforcement* of



of new Distractions, yet we must not yield, or lose Courage, nor renounce to Victory in the midst of the Fight. We must persevere, till God, seeing our Constancy, shall come, and fill us with the Light of his Spirit, put to flight the Enemy, purify our Understandings, and furnish our Reason with a Divine Light, by which our Soul being possessed in peace and patience, freed from all Tempests, may serve God with a perfect joy. The Saint insinuates this for a Reason, to support us in our resolutions of Perseverance; namely, that the Devil never leaves to tempt us, neither must we leave off resisting him; as our Resistance discourages not him, so neither should his Temptation discourage us. God, who is Spectator of our Combats, and Rewarder of our Labours, beholds with Pleasure a faithful Soul amidst Infirmities and Distractions, tho' ready very near, to yield and fall, and comes at last himself, and with a gracious Hand, rescues and plucks him out of Danger.

Perseverance is a Vertue of great use; 'tis to it we owe the fairest Works of Nature, Art and Grace. If God had left the World imperfect, instead of a Wonder, he had made a monitrous Prodigy. There are some Works in special, to which the last and finishing Hand is so essential, that if they be not perfected, that which was begun is utterly thrown away and lost. If you draw but the first Lines of a Picture, they will last on the Cloath; but if you bring a Wheel to the middle ascent of a Hill, and let it go for a Minute, it will run  
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to the bottom of the Vale, and your Labour will not only be imperfect, but quite undone and spoil'd, as if you never had done any Thing. Devotion is of this last sort of Things, leave it half done, and all is lost. 'Tis *Penelope's* Webb; the Night undoes the Labour of the Day. If thy Life is not one perpetual Day, and thou labourest not incessantly to advance in Piety by Exercise; one single Night, formed up of the darkness of Indevotion, and the absence of Grace, will ruin a Work of many Years; and a moment's Relaxation and Idleness will destroy whatever the Courage and Pains of a long Time had produc'd: But there is nothing but Perseverance will in its Time accomplish. Thy Devotion, O Christian Soul, is nothing as yet but a Spark: O, dearly feed this holy Flame, blow it incessantly, heap round it all the combustible Matter thou canst, make thee a Treasure of good Things, turn often towards Jesus Christ, thy Sun and Star, and that small Spark will, going on, become a great Fire; this Fire will cause great burnings, these burnings will throw out Flames, and these Flames will carry thee to Heaven: But if thou neglectest this little Spark, it will quickly die and go out. *Sampson* gave himself up into the Hands of *Dalila*, and slept upon her Knees, she cuts off his Hair, in which his Strength lay, and he awakens, and essays to go out according to his Custom, and bear away the Gates of *Gath*, and break the Bonds of the *Philistins*; but  
alas,

alas he finds himself no longer the same Man. So the good Soul that relaxes from his daily Devotion, and sleeps in the Arms of Pleasure, his Heart is enervated ; he thinks to return, according to his wont, to his Commerce with God ; but the Devil sets upon him, and overpowers him with a multitude of evil Thoughts, under which his Devotion lies bound, as it were, with so many Chains.

Should the Heavens but stand still one Day, it may be, there would be an Universal Overturn of all Nature ; at least, all Things below must suffer some considerable Damage. When the upper part of the Soul stops its Divine Motions, one cannot question but there rises a great disorder in the inferior Part. For the Passions that are still check'd, manage be sure these Hours of relaxation, to prepare for a Revolt. We must therefore be sure to back our Piety and Devotion with the constancy, the quickness, and the regularity of Heaven's Motion, to the End, this little World may always be in good Condition. Nothing should hinder, nothing interrupt the Course of our Devotion. Consider *Daniel*, whom all the Terrors of Death could not stop in his Divine Course of Praying at his Seasons. He must be thrown into the Lions-Den, if he but call on God, but this does not hinder him from prostrating himself, at his Hours, towards *Jerusalem*. But especially, we must get as far as we can from that Custom Men have gotten, of running into the Business of the World, as in-

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to a Croud, to shelter themselves from Devotion. Let us give to God, above all, that which belongs unto him, and trouble not our selves with what becomes of the rest. They say, the Serpent secures his Head, when he is pursued, and exposes his Body when he cannot preserve his Head. The Hours devoted to the exercise of Piety, are the Head of our Life, and 'tis a holy Prudence not to expose them, but cover them from danger, for fear the Devil and the World should take them and devour them. In fine, I say, that Perseverance in Devotion, is better than its violent excesses. 'Tis better to march by slow and little steps, but constantly, than to make swift Courses, but interrupted ones. There are some that have fits of Devotion for a Day; there is nothing in the World so ardent, so humble, and so warmly affected: But to Morrow the stream of Tears is so well drained and dried up, that you can hardly perceive any Tokens of the Concern. The burning of this Fever is so abated, that one cannot find the least heat. A constant mediocrity is to be prefer'd before these warm Excesses of such short continuance. Not that I think, Devotion should not have its Feasts, and Times of Refreshment, and raise it self extraordinarily upon some certain Days and Occasions. These are the exceedings of Devotion, to which we should aspire as oft as we well can; and especially never fail on Times designed and appropriated to Holy Works, such as participating  
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of the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. But I would have the Soul, besides these Extraordinaries, have its ordinary course of Piety well govern'd. And if it cannot always have its extraordinary Motions as were to be desir'd, yet at least, let it never fall into any shameful Relaxation and Disorders.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

I should have but too much reason, O my God, to be discouraged, and despair of success in all my designs, if I considered only the greatness of the enterprize, the difficulties that occur, and the meanness of my Forces, or, to say better, my weakness and my nothingness. I desire great Things, for I desire to be one with God. I would become like him; I would renew his Image in me; I would cleanse my heart, that sin hath sullied and defiled; I would raise that great Edifice, that Sin and the Devil have thrown down; I would ascend the Throne; I would be a King and Priest to God my Father. But, Oh my Soul, where dost thou find strength enough in thee, for these great Things, thou who art darkness, weakness, and impurity it self? Although thou hadst no other Enemy but the Devil, how couldst thou vanquish that red Dragon, with Seven Heads and ten Horns? That cursed Serpent from the beginning of the World, empoisoned with his Breath and Words our first Parents; he at this day infects the Springs and Sources where we go to drink; he lays his Snares in all our ways, and Nets in all our paths; but above all, he never makes greater At-

tempts

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tempts to ruin us, than when we make any, to unite ourselves to God by Prayer and by Devotion. Then he stirs up the Fantoms of our Imagination, to take us from the Presence of our God. He lifts up the floods of our Passions, and our Concupiscence, to draw us from the safe Port. 'Tis true, he has a great deal of reason so to use us, for, O my Soul, thou never fightest with such advantage and success, as by Prayer, when it is fervent and devout. Therefore he stirs up Heaven and Earth to distract thee, and inspire thee with Sentiments of coldness and indifference: But flatter not thy self, my Heart, if thou seest not this Enemy with the Eyes of thy Flesh, dart out his Javelins at thee, yet he is speaking, attacking, and tempting thee by the mouth of thy Concupiscence, that never fails him, and hath made a League with him: But lose not Courage, O my heart, although thou canst do nothing of thy self, thou canst do all things through thy Saviour that strengthens thee. Watch then, be sober, persevere, hold fast, conjure this wicked Spirit, and chase him far from thee; resist the Devil, and he will flee from thee, he presses upon none but such as yield and run backwards.

P R A Y E R.

And thou, Lord Jesus, my Divine Redeemer, Great angel of the covenant, angel of light, oppose thy self, in my behalf, against the angel of darkness. Thou lion of the tribe of Juda, break the jaw-bones of the lion that goes about, seeking to devour me;  
T thou

thou blessed seed of the Woman, break this Serpent's head, and give me a remedy against its poyson. Let thy Grace heal the wounds his bitings have made upon my soul: Support me in the difficulties, that this dreadful foe creates me, and makes me meet in the exercise of devotion. When I enter my closet, or thy church, be to me as a wall of brass and fire, to defend me from the approaches of wicked spirits. So that under the wings of thy protection, and thy love, I may live during these few moments on earth in a tranquil and calm air, and in security and peace, by the favour of which, I may consecrate all my thoughts, my will, my heart, my understanding and imaginations to thee and thy service, and that nothing may be able to withdraw me from thy bosom.

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#### CHAP. V.

*The Fifth General Advice: To have  
God always before one's Eyes.*

**T**HIS is a Remedy against a great many Evils, but in a more particular manner against Indevotion. I shall shortly say, that the faithful Soul should have its Hours of Meditation;

ditation; during which, it expressly draws over  
 again in its Mind, the Image of the Deity,  
 and awakens the remembrance of its Benefits  
 and Graces; but this is not what I would at  
 present say. I speak now of that continual,  
 and as it were, habitual Thought of God,  
 that never should forsake and leave us. 'Tis  
 a most Spiritual and Delicate Meditation, that  
 comes across, and steals from the Business of  
 the World, Time to consecrate it to God's  
 Service. 'Tis a sublime operation of the Un-  
 derstanding, enlightned with the Lights of  
 Grace, that finds out God in every Thing,  
 concerns him in all our Actions, and singles  
 him out from every other Object. 'Tis an  
 Action of the Soul, by which, in the midst of  
 humane Affairs, it turns it self without any  
 violence on the side of God, by a Habit it  
 has gotten. It orders Matters so, that every  
 Thing is, as it were, a Ladder, by which it  
 mounts to Heaven, and every Object shews  
 and entertains with his God. An Artisan in  
 the midst of his Works, a Mariner in the midst  
 of his Voyages, and a Scholar in the midst of  
 his Readings, will find Means to Sanctify  
 what he is about, by concerning God in his  
 Business, and bringing him thither by his  
 pious Meditations and Reflexions. Faithful  
 Soul, let the Lamb follow thee, wherever  
 thou goest, that thou one Day mayst follow  
 him, wherever he shall go; if thou layest  
 thee on thy Bed, think on our Lord's Sepul-  
 chre, who for thy sake entred the Chambers



of Death. Art thou composing thy self to sleep, Oh think of Jesus Christ, whose blessed Eyes the sleep of Death, for thy Salvation, closed. A new-born Infant will bring to thy Mind the humility of thy Lord in his Birth. A Wretch that suffers for his Sins, will make thee think on Jesus Christ, that suffered on the Cross for thine. A Man that asks thee for Relief, tells thee, our Lord was made poor, that thou mightest be made rich. In a Word, from every Thing thou mayst find an occasion to think on God. What shall I say of the Objects in Nature, that will bring their great Author into thy Mind, even against thy Mind? If thou risest in the Morning, thou canst not see the rising Sun, without reflecting on the great Creator of that chief Master-piece of all the World, and without remembring the Sun of thy Soul, that spreads abroad his Rays of Grace into thy Heart, to dissipate thy Darkness. The Trees, the Rivers, Mountains, Woods and Corn-fields, the Fruits, the Flowers, and every Thing, will present thee with thy God. *For the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy-work.* The Flies and Worms themselves, speak thee, O God, since we in them see thy Divinity shine forth. *This Workman, saith St. Austin, appears great in great things, but so that he appears no less great, even in the least of all his Works.* We must therefore form a habit of thinking upon God, even whilst we are doing of another Thing; and this will be the way

way to do that well, we do at all, and to engage God to operate with us. But there are several Employments that take not a Man's Mind intirely up. A Labourer at his Work, a Woman in her ordinary Affairs amongst those of her own Sex, will troul a thousand vain Chimerical Imaginations and Designs in their Heads, and wander and think of a thousand Things successively : And what should hinder them from giving to God this part of their Souls, and the Attention they steal from the Business they have in Hand? Why should they not rather think on their Redeemer, and the Obligations they have to him, and the Acknowledgments they owe him, than on some idle Conversation they have had, or some trifling Adventure, whose relation makes them merry? *We must, says St. Basil, diligently guard our Heart, and never suffer it to start from meditating upon God, for fear the remembrance of his marvellous Deeds should be lost or stifled in the croud of vain Thoughts. And we must so contrive, that by perpetual Remembrance, these Meditations may become like the Indeliable Impression of a Seal and Signet.* This is not so impossible as one may think for, at first; for a truly devout Soul not only thinks on God without any trouble, but very often, without perceiving what it was that introduc'd those Thoughts. *Thy Praises, said David, shall be continually in my Mouth.* Upon which the above-named Saint goes on, *How can this be? Can a Man, amidst the affairs and conversations of the World, have*  
*God's*

*God's praises always in his Mouth? when he sleeps, when he drinks, when he eats, and when he holds his Tongue, can he sing the praises of God? I answer, saith he, there is within a Man an intelligible mouth, by which he receives the word of Life which is the heavenly Bread; and nothing hinders but he may have God's Praises always in his Mouth; and I say moreover, that the Thoughts of God, engraved and sealed in the superiour Part of the Soul, may be called Praises that never leave the Heart.*

In a Word, one cannot well say, how great a Help this is to Devotion. When we must seek for God a great way off, the Soul strays by the way, but if it have him always near it, it cannot fail of finding him. How easy is it to set the Heart in the Traces of Devotion, and the ways of our Lord, when it never loses Sight of him! If you let your Furnace grow quite cold, 'twill put to Pain and Charges too, to heat it quite anew; but keep the Fire a little in, and a little Addition will bring it to its necessary Heat. If our Soul grow quite cold, and interrupts its meditating upon God, 'twill cost us a great deal of Trouble to kindle again the Flames of our Devotion, and therefore we must always keep the Soul in Exercise.

This continual thinking upon God, will be a most acceptable and pleasing Sacrifice to him, like the perpetual Morning and the Evening Offerings; like that holy Fire that burnt continually upon the Altars; in short, like

like an Invocation without ceasing: For, so mayst thou pray incessantly, saith S. Basil, not by pronouncing words of Invocation, but in doing Works of Imitation: If thy Conduct tend only to join, to unite, and make thee like to God, thy life will be as one perpetual and continual Prayer. Do not doubt, but these continued Sacrifices, this Incense that smoaks perpetually, these implicit, indirect Prayers, that ascend from our Hearts in all Places, and at all Times, will become most efficacious means to render God accessible. So that as often as we would unite our selves more straitly to him by Devotion, and more express Prayers, he will incontinently be found by us, and filling us with his Light, he will carry us with him, and honour us with the blessed Communications of his Spirit.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

*A man is strangely made up; he takes abundance of pains, not to do his Duty, and neglects the easiest things, because he is commanded them by God. There is nothing easier than to think on God, there is yet nothing that is less done than this. It seems almost impossible not to think on him, since every object of our Senses speaks out his Divinity. O seest thou not, my Soul, his Lines, his Traces, and his Characters in every thing and place? But dost thou not see them in thine own Conscience? And is he not in every one of us? 'Tis easy then to think on God, but yet 'tis sweeter too, than easy. Ah, my Soul, if thou wert spiritual*  
and.



and fine enough, and as loose from thy corrupted matter as thou shouldst, thou wouldst take the greatest pleasure and delight imaginable in such Meditation. This great Good, this good God, is as well the most exquisite Beauty, as the only Good. My Eyes admire the light of the Sun, the regularity of its Motions, the Efficacy of its heat, and the just and ordinary Revolutions of heavenly Bodies. We stand in admiration at humane Beauties, and the Soul's whole Strength and Elevation seem to us Angelical. But thou must know, my Soul, that all these Excellencies are and flow from God, and are indeed but feeble Images of his adorable Majesty. The light of the Sun is but as darkness to him, and the most excellent exalted Souls, are earthy, creeping, wretched Beings, if compared to his incomprehensible Understanding. If thou hadst seen him in his Glory, thou hadst been ravished with Extasies; thou wouldst say, It is good for me to be here; let me build thee here a Tabernacle: But alas, thou canst not see him; he is nothing of all thou seest, and all thou feelest; he is no bodily Light, nor colour for thine Eyes; he is no Voice nor Sounding for thine Ears; he is no Savour for thy Palate, nor Scent for thy Smelling, nor any solid Body for thy Touch. Thou seest no part of him, and yet mayst find him every where. Think on him, and thy Meditation will make thee feel, and hold, and possess him: Thou wilt see with thy spiritual Eyes, an intelligible Light that effaces all the Beauty of the visible one; thou wilt hear a heavenly Harmony, that surpasses all the Charms of Musick; thou wilt taste of Food, whose delicacy

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and excellence will be beyond Imagination ; and thou wilt cry, O taste and see how good and gracious the Lord is ! The Heart is never so well at ease, as when 'tis near its Treasure. Know then, my Soul, God is thy Treasure and true Riches ; and therefore follow him continually, seek him always, and when thou hast him, never leave him. Should a Woman take delight to think of any thing with so much Joy, as on her absent Husband ? But God is thy Spouse, my Soul, thy Husband is he that hath made thee, and hath knit thee to him in his great Compassions. Shouldst thou not therefore long to possess him, and seek for his divine and chaste Embraces with incredible Desire and Ardour ? Now, thou canst not obtain this favour, but by fixing thy Soul to his divine Essence, and infinite Perfections by continual Meditation. Get then behind, ye vain and wretched things, that rob me of the Object of my Love. Far hence ye criminal Affairs that hinder me from thinking on my God.

P R A Y E R.

I seek thee, O my God, would thou wouldst also seek me, that we might find each other presently. Draw near to me ; lay thine hand under mine head, for I am sick of love. Thou puttest thy veil over thy face, and robbest me of the greatest part of thy glory : but 'tis because my eyes are yet unclean, and cannot

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look

look upon thee; they are weak, and cannot bear the splendors of thy light. Thou art hidden, behind thy creatures, and wilt be seen only by glances: But purify mine eyes, that they may see thee openly, at large; let my heart in thy ways, that it may seek thee: Kindle my affections, that I may embrace thee. If thou art hidden, if thou art far divided from me; I, on the other hand, am a sheep that is strayed and lost, and far from thee. O seek me therefore, shew thy self unto me; remove from me no farther, and hide thy face no longer from me. Return me from my wanderings: Suffer me not to be intangled in the business, and vain matters of this world. Fix my soul to thee by the bonds of thy love, so that I may not be a moment without thinking on thee; and, that when I desire to address to thee in prayer, I may always find thee near me.

C H A P.

CHAP. VI.

*The first particular Advice: To have one's Hours of Devotion well regulated, and well chosen.*

AFTER these general Counsels, it may not be unprofitable to lay down some particular Ones: And first, I believe it may be a great Help to Devotion to have one's Hours very regular. Man is a Creature of Custom and Habit, very near as other Creatures are. A Horse, that has got a Custom of going in such a certain Road, will never fail of returning by the same; when his times of Feeding are come, he will march too and fro without any more to do. So the Heart returns of it self, without any Guidance, or Pains, to the Things it hath had a Custom of doing. Take then your Hours, the Morning, Evening, Noon, at Nine and Three. Make to your self a Law for some Time, never to let those Hours pass, or give them to any Thing but to Devotion; and your Heart will return to them of it self, without any Trouble. The Parts themselves that are destitute of Understanding, are capable of these Habits. When the Stomach has gotten a Custom of Eating at such a certain Hour, if it fail of Eating then, it quickly finds that something is wanting.



ting. The Conscience is the Stomach of the Soul, give it its Meals at settled Times, and when you fail to do so, it will give you Notice. But learn to do no Violence to it, nor solicit it to hold its peace. When once it warns you, amidst your Affairs, that its Time is come; put it not off to another Hour, for if you put it out of Order, 'tis undone. It will warn you no more, you shall then solicit it; and then the Soul is in a sad State, when Conscience is asleep, and the Heart drowsy, and when one hath need to awaken it by some express Reflexion made on purpose.

If you ask me what Hours you must chuse, and how many, I shall find some difficulty perhaps to answer; *David* set out seven for himself. *Seven times a day do I praise thee.* *Daniel* had three principal ones: Our Lord *Jesus Christ* withdrew himself for whole Nights in the Mountain to pray: How were it to be wished, that we could give God all our Time! But alas! The Necessities of Nature, and the Infirmities of the Flesh, hinder that: And I cannot tell of what those devout Men are made, that spend whole Days and Nights in Meditation and Contemplating. I will not pronounce any Thing upon them, I leave every one to his Conscience. If we cannot give God all, it is certain at least, we must give him the better part; and of our Hours, must destine some that must be proper to him only, and never spent upon the World. The Number of them must be set out according

ding to our different Strengths, and we must still encrease as our Devotion gets Ground. A Child cannot lift a Burthen, that a strong Man can carry very easily. Let every one order himself according to his Strength. 'Tis good to eat when one is hungry, and to approach to God when the Heart is heated, as often as it comes he will refuse it nothing, as often as it would come, be sure you let it. But observe, that when your Appetite is gone, and appears not, you fail not, for that, to give it its set Meals; and you had better eat without Hunger, than lose your Life for want of Victuals. It is the same Thing here, if you are miserable enough to lose this holy Appetite of Things Spiritual: Stay not till it return; lose not the Hours of your Devotion, and spiritual Repasts, eat without Stomach, and it may be, your Appetite will return and come again, whilst you are eating. Few Men in perfect Health eat less than twice a Day, and even sick Folks are made to take some Nourishments, as often at least, observing only that their Meals be short and light. I think the same Course would do well, in the Dieting indisposed Souls, and such as are yet but Novices in the Exercise of Devotion. We must be forced to return to it often, but by short Exercises, not to disgust the weak and tender Souls.

If some Clocks be not wound up once or twice a-day, they will leave going, the Weights will touch the Ground, and the whole Motion

tion ceases: The Soul is like this wonderful Machine, made up of Faculties like Wheels and Springs, and the Weight of the Flesh draws them down: Wind them up often, if you would have them go. Strengthen ye the weak Hands, and confirm the feeble Knees: They that look after these Machines, take care to wind them up every Day at certain Hours, otherwise they will be out of order. And this we must observe, in the ordering of our Hearts in the Matter of Devotion.

All Hours are good, for the Heavens are always open, and God's Throne always accessible: But yet there are some much properer than others. Those of the Morning, are so much and truly God's, that one cannot rob him of them without a kind of Sacrilege. If God will have the Firstlings of our Flocks, much rather will he have the first Hours of our Day; and what more proper Time to lift our Eyes and Hearts up to the Sun of Righteousness, than when the sensible Sun is rising on the World? Then is the Time the Morning Star should rise in our Hearts, and Prayer should open the Door of Grace. When can we better lift up our Hearts to God, than at the beginning of a Course or Race, whose Success depends entirely on him? In the Morning we must seal up our Hearts with these holy Thoughts, and busy our Spirits with chaste and pure Ideas; that the Corruption of the World, which in the rest of the Day will come, and, by the Senses, give a thousand  
Assaults

Assaults upon the Heart, may find it bravely fortified. This will be that sweet and heavenly Dew of the Morning, which falling on our Souls, will make them fruitful in good Works the rest of the Day. This will be an Antidote against the infected Air of the World, without which we cannot well stir out of Doors, nor expose our selves to the meeting so many contagious Objects. As God should be the first Thing living in our Hearts, so should he also be the last; he calls himself the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Beginning and the End. Let him open then the Gate of our Thoughts in the Morning, and shut it up at Night. This will be a Seal and Mark the Devils will respect; as naked and disarmed as we are whilst sleeping, they will tremble at our sight, and will not dare to come up to us.

The destroying Angel will, as he passes by, have respect to his Seal and Impression, and this Fruit of the Lamb's Blood. These Evening Exercises will bear good Seed sown in a good Ground, that will not fail to bud and bring forth in the Morning, for the Heart will find no trouble to begin the Day, with what he ended the foregoing one. And since 'tis true, that the Soul left to it self in sleep, is naturally carried to the last Objects of its waking; we need not question very happy Dreams, and those Images that arise from the last Impressions that Devotion left upon the Heart, must needs be sweet and comfortable.



The Night it self is perfectly a Friend to Devotion ; 'tis then the Recollections are easy, the Soul not being dissipated and divided by the Presence of Objects. Ah, nothing sure is sweeter than to fill the Heart with God, when it is void of all Things else. God finds it good, that a faithful Soul should make his Bed his Altar, and offer up his Vows in that Retirement far from other Witneses. Let thy Body be laid, so thy Soul be up, and thou fall'st down upon the Knees of thy Heart, as *St. Clement the Roman* says, methinks these nightly Commerces with God, should and might be more near and frequent ; because, when we are laid in Bed, we bid adieu to the World, and banish all Disquiets and Perplexities from thence, to give the Body its Repose. The Soul is then in good Case, and when it wakes again, finding it self at liberty and free, may easily ascend to God. We find the greatest part of the *Psalms* were composed by *David*, in, or for, the Night. *I will blefs the Lord, faith he, who hath given me warning, my Reins also instruct me in the Night-season. Pf. 16.* He assures us in the 6th *Psalms*, That he watered his Couch with Tears ; and the Spouse says, *By night in my Bed, I sought him whom my Soul loveth.* And History tells us, That *St. Anthony*, the Father of Monks and Hermits, complained very often of the Sun's return, and in such Words as these, very near ; *O Sun, why dost thou trouble the repose and quiet of my Soul ? Why dost thou rise so early, to part me from the Bosom* of

of my God? *Why dost thou come to steal and deprive me of the sight of my true Sun, &c.*

## M E D I T A T I O N.

The measure of the Love of God, is to have neither bounds nor measure, but to conclude in it every degree of love. The true rule for hours of Devotion, is to give God all of them. 'Tis this, my Soul, that thou shouldst do, but canst not; for thou draggest after thee a fleshy prison that will not let thee. Thy affections cannot so far be subdued; thou art subject even to those necessities that will not suffer it: But oh, how happy wilt thou be, when thou shalt be in place, where all thy hours may be bestowed on thy Creator and Redeemer! There, free from all thy chains of Flesh, thou mayst serve in perfect freedom the Father of Spirits. Now thou dividest thy Time betwixt thy Occupations, thy Diversions, thy Meals and thy Devotions: But there this differing power shall be confounded, and make but one business. Thy continual charge shall be to sing God's Praises, and to contemplate on his Glory. Thy Meat and Drink shall be to do the Will of thy Father, which is in Heaven. Thy Pleasures and Diversions shall be to possess, by a most intimate Enjoyment, God, who is the source of all delights. Thou shalt then have no hours of Devotion, for that fourth part shall be confounded with the rest: Thou shalt be all fire, and all flame in God's Service, and therein shall consist thy Sovereign happiness. Wouldst thou then here below, approach to the Glories of Paradise? Multiply and continue

as much as thou canst, thy commerce and communications with God. If thou wert still with him, he would be still with thee, and where God is, is Paradise before. When thou entrest thy closet with devout dispositions, God enters with thee, and after him, a croud of Angels, Cherubim and Seraphim: For the Lord encampeth with his Angels, round about them that fear him. Surely there is not a more charming Object for the Angels, that seek the Salvation of Men, than to see a truly devout Person fall with his Face upon the Earth, bathing his couch and bosom with his Tears, sending up ardent sighs to Heaven, fixing his eyes where his heart is, and lifting up pure hands to God, and longing to possess him. There is joy in Heaven over one devout Soul, as there is over one repenting Soul: And Heaven does as it were descend, and come to this blest Spectacle. O labour therefore, O my Soul, to be continually in the exercise of Devotion, as in that of Repentance, that Heaven may rejoyce, and God come after to thee. By these so frequent Communications, thou wilt become as bright as Moses's Face. The Rays of this divine Sun, will pierce, and clear thee, will dissipate all clouds and darkness from thee, and melt that Ice and Coldness that makes thee negligent and careless. By frequently contemplating on him, thou wilt become his Mirror, and be transformed in the same Image, from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

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## P R A Y E R.

Sum of my soul, I seek thee with all my might; **O** hide not thou thy Face from me, nor suffer an eclipse; scatter these clouds that cover thee, that separate thee from me, and rob me of thy light. My sins, I must acknowledge, raise continually thick, filthy, malignant vapours, that may form gross clouds, and these clouds produce the storms and tempests of thy severe justice, if thou wouldst punish me as I deserve: But, **O** my God, hinder henceforth the rising of these vapours, and drain the source of them; let my heart be no more as a marish ground, full of standing and corrupt waters: But let it be a pure and living spring; let it be no more a cursed field abounding in poisonous herbs, but fertile of flowers and fruits of life; and let from thence ascend to thee sweet fragrant vapours, and benign exhalations of prayers and giving of thanks, that may send forth an odour of sweet labour and appeasement; and let these gentle vapours change into sweet dew, and thy grace, falling on my soul, as rain upon a thirsty land, may refresh it, and make it green and fruitful in the works of righteousness. Thou art my light; enlighten me in the darkness of the night, when I invoke thee from my bed. Come, honour



honour me with thy presence, whilst all other objects are away, that I may possess thee solely, and nothing may deprive my soul of thee. Grant, that the sweetness of this joy may spread it self in my eyes, and diffuse a heavenly sparkling, and an holy gaiety over my face, that may not leave me all the day, but keep me from all the perplexities and troubles to which I am exposed: Let me lie down at night as in thy bosom, and throw my self into thine arms, and fear nothing that is, or can be, dreadful in the night.

## C H A P. VII.

*The Second particular Advice, is Solitude, and holy Assembling together.*

ONE may see, without any very great insight, that Devotion requires Solitude. We have our Lord's Decision in the Case, *When thou wouldst pray, enter into thy Closet.* They were strange Prayers, those of the *Pharisees*, in corners of the Streets and publick Places: Our Lord had Reason good to accuse them of Hypocrisy; but Solitude is not only necessary to the avoiding Pomp and Ostentation, which God in all Things hates, but especially

especially in Devotion; but also to the end that Prayer may be pure and well made. By what Means, I pray, should a Soul recollect it self, where a thousand sensual Objects set upon, and draw you out? We must therefore put it in a place of Surety from them. Let us retire our selves never so far from the World, we shall carry enough of it along with us: And the Ideas of its Object will sufficiently persecute us, without our voluntary exposing our selves unto those Objects. Yes, yes, the Communications of a faithful Soul with God, require a secret Place. *God is that Spouse, faith St. Bernard, who bestows not his favours in crouds, nor exposes them to the sight of men, but loves the Shade, and a Retirement. I held him, and would not let him go, till I had brought him into my Mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me; Cant. 3. 4.* When we have any Design, that requires Application and Attention, we seek Retirement, that we may not be distracted and diverted; we should seek it also for Devotion as much, since nothing in the World requires Attention more. The truly Devout should be always far from Witnesses and Lookers on, and entirely at their liberty. Devotion has its Words and Actions of its own: It impresses on the Soul its Transports and Motions, and the Body oft-times intervenes and mixes it, and this should not be exposed to the sight of Men, that may make wrong Judgments. If these Reasons had any need of being supported with Examples, we  
have

have that of our Lord Jesus, to whom the Mountains seemed not private enough to pray on, without the darkness of the Night adjoining to them. That of *Daniel*, who *shall shut his Chamber-door upon himself at Prayer*. That of *St. Peter*, who *went up to the top of the House to pray*; but this is so much beyond dispute, that 'tis not necessary to add any more.

The Necessity of *Solitude* or *Devotion*, may afford us larger Prospects yet. There have been a great many Men, and I believe a great many Saints, that have looked upon *Solitude* and *Devotion*, as inseparable, and that not only for some few Hours of Retirement, but even for our whole Lives. 'Twas this Opinion that peopled heretofore the Wilderness of *Thebais*, and *Syria*, with so many solitary Hermits. They fled from the World to raise their Souls more easily to God, and acquire a Habit of Devotion purer and more ardent. And hence may come the Christian Name of *Devotion*, from these Peoples devoting themselves in so particular a Manner unto God. It is a hard Matter to pronounce definitively upon this Life: I would not condemn all that have followed it, nor doubt but some of them were led, like our Saviour, by the Spirit, into the Desert. But I may safely say, this Life is subject to as many Tentations as that of the World. 'Tis in my Judgment, presuming too far upon one's own Strength, to expose one's self alone to the Assaults of so powerful an Enemy as the Devil. In Company if one falls, another

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takes him up, but in the Wilderness one must support himself. And all will be little enough, to be one's own Pastor, Conductor and Director; and he that thinks himself sufficient for them all, has too good an Opinion of his own Forces. I desire to say no more against this sort of Life, than *St. Basil*, a mighty Admirer himself of it, hath said: He believes this Life is not more Charitable than Prudent; either one is in the state of giving, or of receiving Aid; if one has need of receiving Aid, 'tis certainly imprudence to confine your self to a Place, where you can have none; if you can give it others, 'tis want of Charity, to deprive Society of your Assistance. He hath Reason to say, that 'tis to deprive one's self of the hopes of Hearing, one Day, from our Lord's Mouth, these Words, *Thou hast fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, and visited the sick, and in prisons.* In a Word, I am afraid this Father's Observation is very true, that this Life is so far from being the Way to Humility, that 'tis a Ladder of Pride; for these Men comparing themselves with themselves, as *St. Paul* speaks, and finding nothing better, think they are perfect. Every Man looks too near, to know himself very well, or well enough to mend himself. Therefore a *Solitary*, that examines himself by no bodies Eyes but his own, lets scape undoubtedly a great many Faults, which any, but such partial Judges as we are to our selves, would never pardon. Nay, so far may this Life



Life be from being useful to Devotion, that I believe it may be prejudicial to it, because it deprives the Soul of the Helps that the practice of Charity and works of Mercy, minister undoubtedly to it. A Man in the Desarts has his Distractions too, and unless his Soul be of an extraordinary Make, they may be, 'tis to be feared, more dangerous than those of the World. A Mind left to it self, without any Guide, commits strange over-fights. Great Business and great Solitude, are two very dangerous Extreames; and an extraordinary share of Grace is necessary both in one and the other Case: And therefore, those that have receiv'd of God but indifferent Gifts, should chuse a Life betwixt these two Extreames. But at least it is without dispute, that *Solitude* is absolutely necessary at Times that are appointed for Devotion; which yet must not be taken or understood to the prejudice of publick and holy Assemblings at Church. They have their Use for Devotion, and one must never deprive one's self of so necessary a Help to Devotion, as publick Prayers are, under pretence of our Closet-devotion. 'Tis true, that every where besides, the Senses are Enemies to Recollection; but here both Senses and Imagination, favour the Movements of a pious Soul. The sight of the Churches, which are God's Houses; the Presence of the Angels, who, we know, are assisting there; the Society of a multitude of Souls, that unite their Vows with their Voices, the  
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Word of God that ecchoes in their Ears ; the Prayers that unite, and being conceived by many Hearts, make up but one Address. All these Things, I say, extreamly help a Soul to make its Elevations ; and often serve to banish from the Mind, the Ideas of these earthly Things, and substituting in their stead the good and holy Ones. 'Tis not impossible to preserve *Solitude*, even in the midst of such a Croud as this. The devout Soul, in this state, is recollected in its self, so that no outward worldly Objects can approach it or distract it. It is then in the Closet of its Heart, and has but one Door open to the Word of God, and to things that may forward his Devotion ; but all are shut upon those Objects of Vanity, that too often disturb those holy Places and Assemblies. *There is*, saith St. Bernard, *a spiritual as well as corporal Solitude*, and he that is free from vain and idle Thoughts is alone, though in the midst of a croud of People : But 'tis a terrible profanation of this Temple, to carry to it indevout Dispositions, to have the Heart open to all sorts of Vanities, to go to see and to be seen ; to hear, to find fault, and catch at Syllables and Sentences. These Men have a great Account to give ; it had been enough to have offended Men, and God too, all the Week besides, and not to come and bid him Battle, as it were, on *Sunday* too. I will not enlarge here so, upon the manner of Devotion in those Places ; my Design being

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only

only to lay down Rules for the Devotion of the Closet.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

Where shall I find some blessed Solitude, to fly to, from the persecution of my Soul's Enemies? If I go out of the World, I carry it with me: If I go into my Closet, I am pursued with a thousand wicked Thoughts, that cruelly persecute me; if I would save my self in the wilderness, and dwell in Rocks and Caves with Mewes and Cormorants; there I should meet with Vultures, piercing Cares and Troubles, that would continually prey upon my very Inwards. I should be set upon by a whole Flock of Birds of light and vain Thoughts, that would transport me from my self, and plunge me in the World again. What shall I do to remedy this mighty Mischief? Thou knowest, O my God, though I do not; O let it be thy Will to teach me! There is here no Port, to cover me from these rough Tempests, no Charms to drive away these Devils, and conjure down these Fantoms of my Imagination: I must therefore get a new Heart, for 'tis not so much the World's Fault, as 'tis my own. 'Tis not that it pursues me, but that I have fix'd it in my Heart, and carry it along with me whithersoever I stir. If my Heart were clean and pure, I might find Solitude, in the midst of Cities and populous Assemblies. My Soul might be collected in its self, and environ'd on all sides as with a Rampart, by the contempt of the things of the World; the love of God and Goodness, would guard all

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Avenues, and drive from thence all interrupting Objects, and I should be as in a place of strength and great security.

P R A Y E R.

O God, make clean my heart within me; purify me from those vain images which sin and satan have engraved in my soul: And then, under the shadow of thy wings and love, I shall find in my self this solitude I seek for every where, but no where find. It must needs be, that thou, my God, shouldst have a mind to free me from my corrupti- ons, but I am still the same, and what am I the nearer? O why is not thy grace powerful enough to mortify the deeds of the flesh, whilst here we live in it? Why must I always have Moab and Amalek upon my sides, whilst I am marching and advancing towards the heavenly Canaan and Jerusalem above? Why have we here below but streams of thy grace? Why not a river or a sea to wash our inwards, and cleanse us from these miserable impurities? Thou wiltst, O my God, my tempters should be always near me, and the Philistians still upon me, that I may wake, and sleep no longer, or rather not at all, upon the knees of Dalila. Thou wiltst, I should always have a thorn in my flesh, and an angel of satan to buffet me,

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that



that I may not be exalted out out of measure. O thou my guardian, let no temptation touch me but what is common to men, give me a happy issue out of all of them, and strength to sustain my self under their assaults: Thy grace is sufficient, 'tis true, but then let it not fail me; let it perfect its work in the midst of my infirmities: Let it drive away all vain thoughts, let it calm the agitations of my soul: Let it direct me to a place of refuge, where, far from noise, passions and worldly affections, I may consecrate my cares, my words, and thoughts, and sing eternally thy praise, and celebrate thy Majesty, and Grandeur.

## C H A P. VIII.

*The Third particular Advice for the Help of Devotion, Meditation, and Reading.*

THE Soul of Man comes into this World at least as ill-inform'd of the Affairs of Grace, as of those of Nature. It is in all Respects, a *Rasa tabula*, a meer Blank, and hath need of being fill'd with every Thing: It easily acquires the Knowledge of what is necessary to the Subsistence of its Life; because those Lights are furnish'd by the Senses, and

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and because those Objects are of its reach; but it hath need of greater Strength, to attain to that Knowledge that concerns the spiritual Life, because those Objects are disproportioned to its Force; and yet these Notices are absolutely necessary to the Practice of Vertue, and especially the Practice of Devotion. This last Vertue is made up of Love and Zeal, but our Love is proportioned always to our Knowledge. I know not therefore of what Nature those Devotions are that are destitute of all Light and Knowledge, and are directed wholly by the Senses. They are, it may be, the Weaknesses of Tempers, rather than the Effects of Grace: These Devotions of the Ignorant are almost always superstitious and gross, and fix themselves on sensible Objects, whereas in true Religion, all is intelligible and divine. The Objects of their Veneration, is commonly an *Agnus Dei*, a Relique, or an Image; and God, that should be the only Object of their Devotion, hath hardly any Share therein. I do not require our Christian should be learned, or should have dived into the Secrets of Nature, or search too curiously and exactly in the Mysteries of Grace: I hold it rather prejudicial to Devotion: But the devout Soul must yet be Spiritual enough to raise it self above the Senses by Meditation. Meditation is an excellent Operation of the Soul, by which it penetrates through the Superficies of Objects, and goes to the very bottom of the

the Heart; 'tis a reflex Action, that rolls its Subject up and down the Heart, to make some good Impressions on it. 'Tis a blessed View, in which the Soul discovers every Moment, some great Thing or other, in what she is about: but these Discoveries are not curious Speculations, to communicate to others, but particular Sentiments, and Applications that the Soul makes, and which are only for her. One cannot doubt but this is of absolute Necessity to Devotion; for the Soul can entertain a Subject no farther than Meditation will let it pass. Devotion is a vigorous lively Motion of the Soul, by which we raise our selves to God, as to our sovereign Good; and therefore the more Meditation applies us to this great Object, and lets us see the Source and Bottom of his Goodness, the more ardent becomes our Devotion. So that this ought to be the principal Subject of our Contemplations. God is good, both in himself, and with respect to us. In himself, because he is great, powerful, majestic, debonnaire, clement, and merciful; and though we should have no Share in these divine Vertues, and their Effects, yet God would nevertheless Possess them, and consequently would be infinitely amiable. One cannot think too often on these Vertues of God; 'tis one of the most powerful Means that *David* used to awaken his sleeping Devotion: *Awaken thou my Tongue*, saith he, and thereupon falls on to chanting out the Power of  
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of God in his Works, his Majesty that shines forth in the Heavens, his Justice in his Judgments, his Wisdom in his Government of Men, and his Clemency towards them. But because Interest hath such a Share with us in all our Considerations, we must also join the Consideration of God's Favours and Benefits. We must descend into the Depths of his Love, and consider him reconciling to himself the World through Christ Jesus: We must try to dive into the Bottom of his Mercy that appears in all Places, and in every Part of the Work of our Salvation: But above all, we cannot sufficiently stay our Thoughts upon the Passion of our Lord Jesus. There we may find a thousand Objects capable of softning the Soul; for the Love of God appears in that, in all its Strength, and with its full Extent. From general Considerations, it is good to come to particular Applications. We must conceive how much we owe to God, for having disingaged us from so many Miseries, to raise us to so many glorious Hopes. In a Word, the Object of our Meditation is as vast and comprehensive as God and all Nature and Grace together; for there is no Flower from whence we cannot gather Hony; we need not therefore fear to exhaust our Thoughts, in a Subject of such vast Extent. Whence comes it then, our Meditations are so often dry, and our Recollections so exceedingly barren; not from the Seed, but from the bad Ground? *Whence comes it, saith Saint Basil,*



*Basil, that our minds find themselves so destitute of good Thoughts, as though there were nothing, that God is pleased withal, that can entertain us? It comes not from any Thing but the Soul's Negligence, for the Subject is inexhaustible; and if the Eye cannot find an End of the wonderful Things it sees, how much less the Mind of what it conceives? If the Eyes cease to see the Light, when it is Day, 'tis not because the Light is out, but because the Sight is hindred. If thou openest, and turnest up a whole Field with Plough, it will return thee a plentiful Crop, otherwise it will remain quite barren; and if thou diggest deep enough, thou shalt come to Springs of living Water: So if thou turnest over this great Subject, God and his Works, by deep and frequent Meditations, there will flow out Sources of Consolations and Instructions; and make no Difficulty to repass over and again, the same Subjects, to the End thou mayst make them familiar. Our Soul is depending on the Body, whilst we live here on Earth; and the most spiritual Ideas are formed in us, by corporeal Motions. It is therefore very useful, to pass and repass over with our selves, the Thoughts of heavenly Things, to the End we may give the Animal Spirits to a Tendency and bent to that Side; and thence it will come in time, that they will naturally flow that way: So that without designing it, we often shall think good Thoughts. I will say one Word yet, for the Comfort of those Souls*  
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that are neither capable of Penetration, nor of great Application, and that is, that they should not be much afflicted if they find not themselves strong enough to carry these Reasonings so far as we have been advising to; and if Conceptions fail thee, be not dismayed, provided these Things proceed not from Coldness. Short but frequent Meditations (by which an ordinary good Soul reflects and makes Applications to itself of the Author of its Salvation, and his Favours,) may stand in Stead of long Reflexions, when one is out of Case of making them.

To the Aids of Meditation, we must certainly call in, the Reading of good Books; for we must not think to draw all from our own selves; and amongst these Books, the holy Scriptures are as much Superiour to the rest, as God is to Man, and the Sun to Stars of the sixth Magnitude. It is this Word that is strong and powerful and sharper than a two-edged Sword; it is that Fire that heats us inwardly, and makes us say, *Does not our heart burn within us?* One Passage of St. Paul (*Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strifes and envyings, but put ye on the Lord Jesus*) compleated the Conversion of St. Austin. In every Page of Scripture we shall find God's Favours, Graces, and precious Promises, so proper to awaken our Devotion. There we shall find Models enough for holy Meditations, proper to raise the Heart, and guide us in our own. Above  
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all, the Book of *Psalms* is an inestimable Treasure for devout Souls. And tho' we should refine upon all the Antients have said, yet we can never say enough of it. It were to be wish'd this Treasure might be all entire within our Memories, that we might every Moment repeat some Lesson of it to our Heart. We should, if it were possible, habituate our Minds so to conceive its Thoughts, and from its Meditations, that all might be done in such Terms, as the holy Spirit uses in that Book.

To the reading holy Scripture, 'tis well to join also the reading of other good Books; and I will hereupon give an Advice that certain good Men have found beneficial; and that is, to chuse out Lessons and Chapters of Devotion, such as have affected you, and to return frequently to them, that the Heart may get a Custom of being affected at their Sight. 'Tis the ordinary Course of most Men to join certain Motions of Heart to certain Images, so that as soon as the Images present themselves to the Mind, the Motions arise within the Heart. For Example, If a Man has run some extreme Hazard at any Time in a Wood, the Image of a Wood shall hardly ever strike his Imagination, but his Heart shall be agitated by Fear. So our Hearts being once moved, at the reading some pious Discourse that has affected it lively, will never fail to be moved at the Presence of those same Thoughts, provided we read them with devout Intention, and with design to be affected. I compare this

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to that which happens to barking Dogs, that presently leave off, as soon as they hear the Voices that they know. So the Heart being made familiar to godly Thoughts, that have often touched it, will feel continually the same Movements when those Thoughts come upon him; for 'tis not with sacred and holy Lectures as 'tis with profane ones: Those here please the first Reading, but little the second, but never bear a third. The same Thing may happen upon reading a Book of Devotion, when read for Divertisement, to see the Neatness of the Phrase, the Beauty of Thoughts, or the like. This way of Reading affects not the Heart, but the Imagination and Will never endure a second Trouble. This Thought discovers to us a Mystery sufficiently obscure, namely, why the same Thing affects one Man extremely, but never touches another: It is from hence, that all Men read not with the same Dispositions nor with the same Intentions. A Preacher that would speak an Hour upon a Subject of Piety, will read Books that will instruct him therein; but if he has not a Soul himself truly devout, and naturally so, will never be affected, because he comes not thither with Intention to be affected, he only seeks for Matter to fill up his Hour. Our Heart does very near what we would have it do; so that good Readings, that they may be helpful to Devotion, must be done with a very devout Design and Purpose, without which no great Success can be looked or hoped for.



But as much as Devotion is aided by the reading good Books, so much is it prejudiced by the reading bad Ones. 'Tis a great Shame to Christianity, that it suffers the setting out and reading such bad Books, with more impunity and ease, than ever Paganism it self did, though at the Height of its Corruption. This Age, and in particular, this Nation, may be justly branded with Infamy, for this Swarm of wicked, foolish Novels and Romances, which the Effeminacy of our Hearts, the Corruption of our Souls, and the Craft of the Devil, have brought into the World. We must needs be great Lovers of Lies, when fifty Years have produc'd more Fables, than six thousand Years have brought forth Histories; and the Church must be very corrupt to suffer it, and in a Manner authorise those shameless Productions, so full of unclean, impure Imaginations. Every devout Soul should have the reading of these Things in Abhorrence, for nothing certainly dissolves and weakens the Heart like it. I grant, we may not fall into the Extremity of this Mischief by those Books, nor be corrupted into true real Disorder by these false Examples. But this, at least, is certain, that the Mind returns from reading these mischievous Books, fill'd with such cursed Images as drive away, and grieve the holy Ghost, and are absolutely incompatible with the Spirit of Devotion.

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M E D I T A T I O N.

If thou art ignorant, my Soul, of things, that regard thy Salvation, 'tis wholly thy own fault: Thy God opens two great Books before thine Eyes, where thou mayst be instructed in the wondrous Things of Heaven, and thy Salvation. I have often cast mine Eyes on Nature, Heaven, Earth, Mountains, Rivers, Fields and Forests: I have often fixed my Eyes upon the Heaven, and its great Luminaries, and the Stars. But I own, to my confusion, that these Temptation were all barren, they were done carelessly, without attention and without reflection: Do therefore, O my Soul, what thou hast hitherto never done well, and as thou shouldst: Look on the Heavens and their vast Extent, and acknowledge the greatness of the Workman, his power, his wisdom, and his might: See how he hath made it as it were his Task, to depaint himself in all Places, and leave the Traces of his Steps, where-ever he hath passed. Look on the Sun, that spreads about such heat, and which Men call the Lamp of the World: 'tis the Image of thy God that is light himself, the spring of life is in him, and in his light do we see light. This innumerable multitude of lights, that shine in the Firmament, are the Emblems of those glorious Souls that shine in the Heaven of the blest. The swiftness of those vast prodigious Machines that roll above my head, should make thee, O my Soul, think on the mighty Arm that gives them life, and impresses Motion on them: The evenness and justness of these Mo-

tions preach the wisdom and regularity of God's Actions, who does nothing but what is just and reasonable: The magnificence of the visible Heavens, may without trouble, lead thy Meditation to the thoughts of another life, and give thee some conception of the glory God hath prepar'd for thee in Paradise. These visible Heavens, so fair and so magnificent, are but the Porch and Entry of that Palace, where God hath designed thee an everlasting Mansion. How stately and how noble must the House then be, my Soul, whose Avenues and Entries are so rich and pompous? If from the Heavens thou steppest into the Airs, that are the Regions of Storms and Tempests, Rains and Dews, in the last thou wilt see the Emblems of the Grace of God, and in the first thou wilt see the Instruments of his Wrath, and the Messengers of his Vengeance. The one will lead thee to the Meditation of his Justice, and the other to the Consideration of his Mercy. If thou descendest to the Earth, thou wilt there discover, round about thee, an incredible number of Objects of all sorts, that will instruct thee severally: Some speak to thee of God, his Wisdom and his Power, as well as those of the Heavens: Others declare thy weakness and thy vanity, and talk of Death, and the necessity thereof, the inconstancy of humane Affairs, and an hundred other Lessons. But all this is nothing in comparison with the Knowledge thou shalt get from the reading that other Book that God hath dictated to his Prophets and Apostles; in that thou wilt see, my Soul, the Abysses of divine Wisdom, the Infinity of his Love, and the Depths of his Mercy. But  
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without wading too far in these depths, what fruit may we not bring back from meditating on our Saviour's Death, and contemplation of his Cross? There thou wilt learn, my Soul, how thou shouldst love, for that's the school of Love: There thou wilt see thy heavenly Saviour, consumed with the Zeal of God's House, and burning with the flames of Charity. He loved so the World, that he gave himself to death for it, but 'twas a cruel Death too, the shameful and the painful one, the Death of the Cross. He expos'd himself to all Arrows of God's Anger; he drank up all the dregs, and bore the whole weight of his Indignation; and for whom, even for his Enemies. 'Tis thus, my Soul, that we must love. And this is but a little part, of what may be learn'd in that divine Book.

P R A Y E R.

But, O my God, I read without fruit, I meditate without success. Spread thy light abroad into my heart, O thou my sun; open mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law: Let thy word be in me as a two-edged sword, to the dividing of my soul to the joints and marrow: Thy word is truth, O sanctify me by thy truth. Let my heart burn within me, whilst thou talkest, and declarest to me the Scriptures: Let me receive this word, with a thirsty soul, and let it be to me a spring of waters, living waters, springing up to ever-



lasting life, and bring me by the streams of thy grace, to the endless ocean of thy glory.

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## CHAP. IX.

### *The Fourth particular Advice, to help Devotion: Prayer.*

I Design not here to make an Elogy of Prayer, nor set forth all its Benefits and Uses: both Antients and Moderns have done it at large: I will only say, 'tis one of the surest Means to purify the Soul, because there is nothing, by which we approach so near to God: there is no time, when he communicates himself more freely to us. He hath often been observ'd, to have given his extraordinary Inspirations to Men amidst their Prayers. Saint *Peter* in praying fell into an Extasy: Saint *Paul* was caught up into the third Heaven: *Cornelius* at his Prayers had the Vision of the Angel: Saint *Monica*, Saint *Austin's* Mother, after so many Prayers and Tears for the Salvation of her Son, received in a Dream, that excellent Revelation of his Conversion, an Angel telling her, *Afflict not thy self, for thy Son is with thee.* As God is the Sun of our Soul, when he throws his Rays directly on our Hearts, he needs must both enlighten them, and warm them; he must needs dis-

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sipate the Vapours of the lower Part, and leave his Image there. Now this Communication of the Rays of his Grace is never more bestowed than in Prayer. I will not enlarge, upon examining the Conditions, with which Prayers should be made, to be devout: We know well enough they must be attentive, persevering and ardent. I will only advise two Things, the one to avoid Lassitude or Weariness, the other Distraction: First then, I say, few Souls are capable of long Prayers; for to make up a Prayer wholly devout, there must be an extraordinary Application of Soul, an extraordinary Elevation, and an entire Detachment or unfastning from this World. Now these Things do a kind of Violence to the Soul, that naturally inclines to Relaxation, and therefore cannot last long; and if you will not give the Heart this Relaxation, it will take in spight of your Teeth, and fly out. I would therefore have Devotions long, but divided into little Spaces, that may make up several Parts, and each of them short. Devotion is made up of three principal Exercises, Meditation, Reading and Prayer. I would not have each of these Exercises performed all together, one immediately after another, but at several Times, at little Distances: We must indulge something to the Weakness of the Soul, and keep it from disgusting by Diversity. A little Reading will be the first Step of Elevation, and a little Meditation on that Reading will raise the  
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Heart a Step higher; and after that a short Prayer will bring it to the top. After which it will return again to Reading, Meditation and Prayer in the same Order. In Prayer the Soul will fly into the Air by the Strength of its own Wings; and returning to Reading will do as those Birds that, when weary of flying, sit down and rest themselves, but not upon the Ground, but on some very high Tree. Our Soul in like Manner will rest itself, not by falling on the Ground, for it will never set its Foot there, or suffer it self to return to the World, but will keep up aloft, and rest upon the Prophets and Apostles. *Aaron* and *Hur* will support it up, and lift it towards Heaven; and taking thence its Flight, will rise by little and little upon the Wings of Meditation, till it return again by Prayer, whence it first set out. This Method will afford it Time, to take its Breath, and recover its Forces: One cannot last long, when when all his Strength is put forth; but by taking Breath, and marching fairly, from Time to Time, one may go a great Way in a Day.

The other Advice I would give, respects those, who not being versed in, or much used to the Operations of the Soul, are less fit for great Elevations: These Persons commonly perform their Exercises of Devotion by Heart; a way from which Distractions, are almost inseparable. I would advise them therefore, to unfix themselves a while, and meddle

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meddle not with Words, but attend only to the Sense: I do not mean they should do this in their Family-prayers or publick Ones, I know very that all the World has not the Gift of Thinking, and putting those Thoughts immediately into Words that are proper and edifying to the Publick: But for the Devotions of the Closet, they should be rather from the Heart, than Tongue. When the Imagination makes no Attempt to bring out Thoughts, or for the Choice of Words, but goes on in a Road without any fear of losing it self, it seldom fails of stepping out, and calling somewhere by the Way, as having little to do in the Place you would have it stay in; but when it must attend to the Manner of expressing fitly the Conceptions of the Heart, the Heart and Imagination then joining their Forces make up the Attention compleat. I can't endure to hear say, that all the World is not capable of composing: All are not indeed capable of composing for Men, but for God they are. Let us try to do never so well, we shall but lisp, as it were, before God; and the most eloquent Tongue in Nature is, if compared with the most Tongue-tied Person in the World, but just as one Infant to another, with respect to God. God hears and understands all Tongues and Styles alike: He asks for neither Order, nor Elegance, not he; the most confused Thoughts, that rise in Crouds from the Heart, are often what he likes best. He understands the silent Sighs; and knows what  
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we would have, although we neither can speak, nor hardly conceive what 'tis we mean. *For the Spirit of God, says St. Paul, makes intercessions for us with groans that cannot be uttered.* After all, there are none but know very well what 'tis they want, and consequently none but what can pray; for Prayer is nothing but a Chain, or Composition of Desires of what we want, for the present Life, and that to come. The Passions are Eloquent, and the Imagination heats with the Heart, by Sympathy: And hence it comes, that such as excuse themselves for want of Light and Invention, when once they are in Wrath, never want Words to express and shew themselves. Certainly, if the Heart were heated by the fire of Devotion, the Imagination would quickly find it out, and feel it, and never would complain of want of Matter, both for Thought and for Expression.

### M E D I T A T I O N.

*Thou hast never rightly understood, my Soul, how far thy God hath honoured thee, in suffering thee to throw thy self at his feet; thou art not sensible of this Favour: Nay, thou believest, that God is, in a manner, thy debtor, for humbling thy self before him: Thou never remembrest, that Audiences are very dear and rare, even with our earthly Princes, that are themselves in God's sight but very shadows and meer nothings. The King of Kings, will lend thee his ear, will hear thee, will help thee, and his*  
 Throne

Throne is accessible every minute ; thou needest not, to make thy entrance, either credit, or favour, or friends, or pitiful solicitings, or any troublesome Attendances. And yet how great this Throne, how great his Glory and Magnificence ? God sits thereon, encircled with a light, whose lustre dazzles even the Eyes of Seraphims : Round him are thousands and ten thousands of Angels and Arch-Angels, prostrating themselves before him : On his right hand are rivers of Pleasures to delight his Children in ; on his left, torrents of fire, to consume his Enemies : On one side, Hell and Death, and all the dreadful executioners of wrath and vengeance : On the other, Heaven and Paradise, with all the glorious Recompences God hath prepar'd for those that love him. Thou seest not this, my Soul, and therefore thou art but little affected ; but thou must needs believe it, although the Veil of the Flesh at present hinder thee from seeing it. Represent therefore to thy self, the magnificence of that Throne, admire, and tremble, and acknowledge with thanks, that though thou art corrupted, O my Soul, by the Commerce thou hast with a wretched Body, abiding in a house of Clay, having thy seat in the Dust, as thou truly hast ; thou art yet at liberty, to present thy self each moment before that God, who sitteth upon the Cherubims, and flieth upon the wings of the Wind, who maketh his Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a flame of fire. Thou hast permission to pray to him, my Soul, but alas, thou knowest not how, and that is, because thou canst not love. One never wants something to say to a beloved Friend ; when one's Heart

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is entirely opened to any one, and one is permitted to pour himself into his Bosom, one never hesitates, or stops short. Ah, if thou didst but perfectly love thy God, thou never wouldst be weary of entertaining him; thy Imagination never would be frozen, thy Tongue never be mute, and thou wouldst never want expression; thy Heart would spread abroad like a stream, and thy Prayers would roll about as flames; but thou languishest at thy Prayers, because thou speakest not to God, as to thy near Friend, the dryness of thy Heart proceeds from the coldness of thy Affections, and thy want of Charity to God.

### P R A Y E R.

*To the Holy Ghost, and to Jesus Christ.*

O holy spirit, who art the love it self of the most adorable Trinity; spirit of prayers, make intercessions for me, by interrupted sighs and groans unutterable: Teach me how I must pray: I know very near, what should be the matter of my prayers, but I know not how to give them form: I perceive in my self a chaos of thoughts, and confused notions, which I cannot untangle, or make any thing of: The light is confounded with the darkness; and worldly thoughts with heavenly ones. Divine spirit, who, in the beginning of the creation, drewest the light from darkness, and order from confusion:

Stretch

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Stretch out thy wings, even now over the chaos of my thoughts, and strike out prayers from thence; well conceived, well form'd, and well digested: Thou makest the dumb to speak; thou givest eloquence to those that stammered: Touch my tongue with a coal from thy altar, that my lips may be thereby purified; open my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise; warm thou my heart, and fill it with good and pious thoughts, that from its abundance my mouth may speak. And thou, O Lord, mediator of the new covenant, our great High-priest, receive my prayers as the incense, and bear them to the presence of that adorable throne, on which thy Father sits, and make them come before him: Cause thou an Odour of sweet smelling peace and reconciliation to arise from thence, and let him accept the calves and offerings of my lips; and because my offerings are imperfect, cover thou them with thy most perfect righteousness; and obtain that for me, by thy intercession, which all my prayers can never do.

C H A P.



## C H A P. X.

*The Fifth particular Advice, Fasting,  
and Mortification.*

**W**E cannot deny, but Fasting and Mortification are very necessary Helps to Devotion, unless we will deny the Scriptures, and the Maxims of the Fathers of the Church. The Scriptures seldom separate Prayer from Fasting; and to both of them together attribute Power of driving out the most dangerous Devils. *This kind of Devil goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting.* The Flesh is a rampant Horse, that we cannot manage, but by plucking up the Reins: 'Tis a Lion that we cannot, nor must not, feed till he grows fat, if we would not have him grow wild, and endanger his falling upon us: The Body, if you observe it well, is this very Flesh, of which the Scriptures complain so often, and so loud: Of which it is said, that it is an Enemy to God, and its Fruits, are Excesses, Insolencies, Murthers, Adulteries, Contentions, Strifes, Envyings, Ambition and Avarice. To hinder these Fruits from growing, 'tis good to keep this Root dry; for if we water it with carnal Pleasures, it will shoot forth its cursed Branches, and will turn us out of the Way of our Salvation. As Plants that grow  
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apace, and surmount their Neighbours, keep them in evil State, by drawing from them all the good Nourishment of the Earth; so the Flesh never thrives but to the Soul's cost, which it still keeps in great Driness of Consolations, and an extream Barrenness of Fruits. A great Meal is but an ill Preparation for an Exercise of Devotion; one cannot be in the Kitchen and the Closet at the same Time; and whilst the Soul is in its Furnaces, seething, and digesting its Victuals, and distributing its Aliments about, it cannot stir abroad to Places appointed for Meditation and Contemplation. There are still thick Clouds, and gross Vapours, that are rising from the Stomach, that makes the Heart unfit for any lofty Flight, or excellent Operation. *Abundance of Delicates*, saith St. Basil, *send up abundance of fuliginous Exhalations, like Clouds, that darken as it were, the Sun, and Light, which is caused in the Understanding, by the Holy Ghost*: And therefore, *Moses*, that he might Contemplate upon God, without any Cloud to interpose, continued forty Days and Nights, without either Meat or Drink, that the Superior Part of his Soul, might be free and disengaged from the Trouble and Obscurity of the inferior Part. Ease and Abundance make the Sins of *Sodom*; and the Impurities of Life, are the Effects of the Mouth's Excess. After high feeding, the Blood is enflamed, and that gives Life and Disposition to all carnal Pleasures, and an Inclination to worldly Delights, which is always

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immoderate, and knows no Bounds or End. The People sat down to eat, and to drink, and rose up to play. 'Tis therefore of absolute Necessity, to observe the Rules of Sobriety, and to nourish the Body no farther than is necessary to its Well-being: We must give it what is necessary, and refuse it what is superfluous, that it may never be in a Condition to rebel against us. Nay, we must oft retrench its Necessaries, to tame it the more: For the Flesh being humbled, contributes much to the Contrition of the Heart; and the less a Soul is united to its Body, the easier it is to take its Flight towards God. In Fasting, our Devotions are not interrupted by Sleep and Drowsiness, nor corrupted by involuntary Movements, nor sullied by dishonest Thoughts.

But concerning Fasting, there are several Things to be understood: First, We must not look upon it as a part of Devotion, and Worship, by which God is served; for the Kingdom of Heaven is not in Meats and Drinks, 'tis only a Help to Devotion; and this Consideration will help us to another, and that is, that we must not think that Fasting is any Thing in itself, but only in the case of Devotion: For to fast when we Ride, or take a Journey, or in any of our Affairs, is a Work of no great Merit, nor of Use. The first Consideration will furnish us with a Third, and that is, that Fasting need not be us'd in Devotion any oftner than we find it helpful to

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us, or that we stand in need of it, and consequently, one cannot give any certain Rules for its Practice, or its Continuance. There are some Tempers so weak, that Fasting is so far from being aiding to their Devotions, that it rather hurts them; because it throws the Body into a certain Negligence and Dulness, that hinders the Soul from raising it self. Others there are, that cannot be subdued but by long Mortifications, and these should never spare themselves. Some are tamed more easily, and should get to understand themselves, but yet they must take heed, that the Weakness of their Tempers serve them not for a Pretence to dispense with their necessary Mortifications.

But we cannot however approve the Cruelties, some exercise upon their Bodies, as upon declar'd Enemies, sparing neither Fire nor Sword. We will not meddle here with Controversy, but leave every One to their own Conscience. We only say, that though these Excesses are not new or modern, yet they are not ever the better for all that. Church-History, I know, supplies us with abundance of Examples, of excessive Mortifications; but I had rather keep to the Decision of St. Basil, who cannot be suspected in this Case, being a great Partisan, and promoter of Fasting and Mortifications: Yet this St. Basil, repeats a great many Times the Precept of Mediocrity, and insists very much upon it: He forbids his Virgins, and his Solitaries, to



please themselves in excessive Mortifications, and says, in his *Book of Virginity*, *That the burthen of the Flesh that is heavy and exceedingly bloated up, is no greater a hindrance to the raising up the Soul, than the feebleness of a body sick and macerated by a long excessive Mortification: And therefore he expressly orders, That Necessity be the Rule of Abstinence and Fasting.*

Another Piece of Advice that I would give on this Occasion, is, that Fasting and corporal Mortification, strike not to the bottom of the Soul, nor mortify all sorts of Sin. *St. Basil says, That the Devil not being able to possess himself of a Soul tamed by great Mortifications, seizes on a Soul that is wholly naked, and by, and in it, begins and ends fleshly Desires.* If the Soul, without the Body, is capable of committing corporal Sins in spite of all Mortifications, How should it cure it self by those Means, of such Distempers as are entirely in it, such as are Envy, Pride, and Self-love? We know also, these Passions reign with greater Sway in the Souls of the Men of Hair-cloath, Scourges, and Macerations, than elsewhere. This War so cruel to the Body, and that seems a renouncing to all Self-love, is yet for the most part, but another Sort of most delicate Self-love, that tends to Glory by extraordinary Ways, to attain it the more certainly. From all this, I conclude, *That the Mortification St. Paul requires, when he bids us, Mortify our Members which are upon Earth; and that which we have thought necessary to advise*

vise to, goes farther than bodily Mortification. To stifle this Self-love, this Pride, these Jealousies, these Hatreds, Envyings, Avarice and Ambition, there is need of another kind of Fasting, and that is, an abstaining from all such Actions as may feed and nourish those Vices. I conclude this Chapter and this Treatise, with the excellent Words of the oft-named St. Basil, *Take heed to thy self, that thou definest not the Excellence of Fasting, by abstaining only from eating, for a true Fast consists in abstinence from Sin. Thou eatest no Flesh, but thou devourest and tearest thy Neighbour: Thou abstainest from Wine, but thou abstainest not from doing Outrage: Thou waitest for the Evening before thou wilt eat, but thou spendest the Day in Wranglings: Woe to them that are drunk, but not with Wine. Anger is the drunkenness of the Soul, that sets it beyond, and out of all Reason, as well, and as much, as Wine.*

### M E D I T A T I O N.

'Tis a dangerous Drunkenness, that of Wine; I own it is, and an abominable Sin, the sin of Gluttony; they are great Enemies of Devotion; and therefore Fasting, Abstinence and Sobriety, are very necessary, to the assisting and promoting it. But take good heed my Soul to thy own self, these Vices principally respect the Body. There is another Drunkenness, another Gluttony, that are immediately exercised by thee, and are, it may be, much more dangerous. This Drunkenness is Pride,  
this

this Gluttony is Covetousness and Ambition. How many Souls do I see drunk with the Vanities of this World, and a high Opinion of themselves! they are so exalted with Pride, that all this World cannot contain them, so far they extend, and so high they raise themselves. This Drunkenness makes them make a thousand false steps, and a thousand stumbles. Their ways are all oblique and crooked, as the ways of Drunkards truly are. They have always a great Opinion of themselves, and of their Wisdom, Power and Prudence; yet all this often fails them; they reel up and down, and at last they fall. For Pride, says the wise Man, goes before a fall. Examine well thy self, my Soul, if thou art not tainted with this Evil, nor drunk with the thoughts of thy own Justness and Deserts. Alas, if thou deniest this, thou acknowledgest it. Ah, 'tis a mighty piece of pride to think one is not proud; for 'tis to think you are as good indeed, as you esteem your self; but no Man in the World but esteems himself better than he truly is. Thou wilt say, it may be, that thou hast a very ill Opinion of thy self; but be thou sure, my Soul, thou dost not despise thy self, as much as thou art truly despicable: But, if thou dost despise thy self indeed, thou makest a merit of that very thing, and art proud of thy own neglecting thy self. Thy other Vice of Gluttony, the gluttony of the Soul, is no less dangerous. Thou seest Men, my Soul, that devour and eat continually, and never say, it is enough. Why, 'tis no otherwise with the ambitious and the covetous, that suck the Substance of the Poor; that eat the People of God, as it were bread;

bread ; that labour with inconceivable greediness to enrich themselves ; that search the World about, and find no end of their Desires, that mount to the highest pitch of Honour and Greatness, but cannot fill the depth of their Ambition. Take heed, my Soul, of launching out to these Excesses : For he that is an hungred for Silver, will never be satisfied therewith. Quench then the fire of thy Desires, for if thou fillest them, thou feedest them ; and they will eat thy very Entrails, and cause it may be, such a flame as may consume thee, and thy Neighbours. I must not therefore neglect bodily Fasting, but the principal Fast is Humility, which will preserve me from the drunkenness of Pride ; and content of Mind, which will make me neglect all things superfluous, and be content with all things necessary. This is the true sobriety of the Soul, and these two Vertues go hand in hand. Be humble, O my Soul, and thou wilt be contented with thy Fortune. Know but how little thou art good for, and thou wilt quickly be persuaded, that thou hast more than thou deservest.

## P R A Y E R.

Alas ! my God, make me to understand my vileness, and my nothingness ! 'Tis very sure that I am nothing, but yet I cannot confess as much ; my mouth indeed says it, but my heart agrees not thereto ; and I still find within me the devil of pride, solliciting me, and saying softly to me, fool that  
thou



thou art ; why dost thou speak thus vilely of thy self ? If thou dost not prize thy self, who shall ? Are other men obliged to have a better opinion of thee than thou thy self hast ; since thou shouldst know thy self the best ? If I humble my self befoze thee, O God, 'tis because I look upon it as a thing of no disparagement ; the proportion betwixt my self and thee, being so infinitely great. But with men I take other measures ; I endeavour to deceive them, and give them a great opinion of me ; I would keep my rank, I would be valued, and cannot endure to be despised. O my Jesus, who humblest thy self to death ; inspire into me thy humility, and disengage me from my pride : That being persuaded that I merit nothing, I may be always content with what thou givest me ; that piety and content of mind, may be to me great gain ; and having food and raiment, let me be therewith content.

## C H A P.

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## C H A P. XI.

*Of the Rash Judgment that is made  
against the Devout.*

I Have given such Advice as I thought necessary to Devotion. But before I end, I believe, I owe a Word of Consolation to such as are truly Devout, of whom there is so hard a Judgment passed in the World. They are all of them commonly put into the rank of Hypocrites: they are false Devoto's, say the Prophane, that observe Forms so exactly, that are found so constantly at the Exercises of Piety; that lend such Attention to a Sermon, that Pray and Communicate with so many visible Tokens of Devotion. We are, say they, nevertheless, good Christians, for having less Affectation; we have that which is solid in Piety, and others have the Appearances. We must own, that Hypocrisy does a great deal of mischief to true Devotion. I do not deny but that there are abundance of false Devoto's. There is no Veil, with which evil Consciences do more commonly cover themselves, than that of Piety. But because there are Hypocrites and false Religious, is it therefore necessary there should be no truly devout People? Because there are false Diamonds and

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false Lights, are there no true Ones of each kind? There are some that think they have found a good Remedy for this Evil; and that is, they affect an appearing neglect of Devotion; for having at the bottom some Zeal, they imagine it necessary to affect in publick, a Style, and Air of Indifference, to avoid the Accusation of Hypocrisy. But this is to avoid one Evil by incurring another, and a greater. When we are brought to the necessity of either committing a Fault our selves, or occasioning another to do so, we must resolve upon the last. We are called to let our Light shine in good Works before Men, and to edify our Neighbours by our good Examples. Woe to such as place the Candle under a Bushel. But to say truth, I believe, that those that make it their Business to hide their Devotion from us, hide no great Matter from us; there is I doubt, but a very little within. When a Chamber is on fire, the Flames go out at the Windows. Devotion is a Fire, that throws its Flames through every open Passage, and nothing can hinder them. If the Heart be full of Zeal and Piety, it will appear upon the Tongue, in the Hands, and even in the Eyes. 'Tis true, we must avoid Affectation, God abhors those pompous Shews and Ostentations of Piety, that set themselves forth at the Street-corners, and are perfected by elevations of the Hands, turning the Eyes, and pale Countenances. The most

secret

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secret Devotions are always the best ; but 'tis very easy to distinguish Affectation from Sincerity. Did our prophane ones know themselves never so little, or understood but any Thing, they would never confound a modest Piety, and sage Devotion, that shines not but from under the Veil of profound and true Humility, with a Devotion made up of Grimaces. The Lives and Manners of Men are the Touch-stones of their Sincerity and Devotion. If a devout Person be covetous, ambitious, one that enriches himself at the Expence of the Poor, a furious Man, a revengeful, or the like, I consent he shall be put amongst the false Devotees. But if his Life is in all respects unblameable, 'tis a Sin to be punish'd with all the flames of Hell, to judge that his Devotion is false and hypocritical : 'Tis a kind of Sin against the Holy Ghost, and like that of the *Pharisees* against our Lord, when they accused him of doing that by the help of the Devil, which he did by the Finger of God, and by his Spirit. These prophane Persons do the same Thing, they attribute to the evil Spirit of Hypocrisy, the work of God's Spirit. But, say they, if these Devoto's appear regular in their Lives, it is because they have Art enough to conceal their naughtiness ; the love of their Reputation engages them to such continued Precautions, as take and keep from the Publick all manner of Knowledge of them. But is not this to



violate all sort of Rights, to invade even those of God himself, and pretend to dive into the very Heart? Is not this to violate the Asylums of Secresy, to judge thus hardly, of what appears by no manner of Thing in the World? Is it not to go against all the Rules of good Sense, to judge a Man to be wicked, because he appears good? To conclude, I say, That if I were driven to declare for one, either the Hypocrite, or the profane *Libertine*, I should rather do it in Favour of the first, than second: The Hypocrite at least is half a Christian, tho' he have the worst share of it. His Exterior is edifying, and his false Piety may kindle true in other Folks. But the *Libertine* has nothing good, either within, or without. He offends God, scandalizes his Neighbour, ruins his own, and other Mens Salvation. I end therefore, with advising our Religious to affect nothing; to take great heed, that he hide not his Devotion under the Veil of Indifference, to please the Prophane: That he be exact in frequenting holy Assemblies; to hear with Attention; to pray with Ardour; not to dispense with Actions of Humility, but yet to do them with Moderation: And after this, let him make an Attempt to raise himself above the Judgment of these openly prophane People, and God that sees the sincerity of their Hearts, will recompence them, and punish most severely those rash Judges.

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M E D I T A T I O N.

*What an extravagant madness is it, more to fear the rash Judgments of Men, than the just ones of God? But yet my Heart reproaches me with doing this. How often have I found in my self an inclination to do something good, and have been bindred by a wicked shame? I shun the being remarkable for my singularity, and therefore I am ordinarily just as the rest of the Croud. How oft was I inclin'd to have said some good things, yet chose rather to attend to other Discourses, vain or sinful? Nay, I not only attended to, but made up part of them my self. How often have I met with the profane, whose wicked words I had in true abhorrence, but yet I suffered and approved them by my Silence? How frequently have I condemn'd such and such Pleasures, in which notwithstanding I suffered my self to be afterwards engag'd? Curse on thee, O thou fatal deadly stream of Custom! Who is there that is strong enough to withstand thee? O wilt thou never be drawn dry? How long wilt thou persist to drag by force the Sons of Eve into this vast and perilous Ocean, where they can hardly save themselves, that get upon the Plank of Jesus Christ his Cross? Alas my Soul; if thou art in the Croud, thou wilt perish with the Croud: Thou wilt be nevertheless damn'd for going to Hell with company. The society and multitude of those accursed ones diminishes not their Pains. Seek not therefore the approbation and the praise of Men at the expence of thy Conscience*  
and

and Salvation: that is, to purchase wind and smock, at much too dear a rate. What signifies it to thee, what Men judge of thee, provided God, that sees thy inwards, judges well? In the World, Sins carry away Rewards, and the brave Vices are commended: But comfort thy self, and be assur'd another Life will come, in which all shall receive what is their due. Then the rash judgments of Men shall be made void by God's most Righteous One. Then Jesus Christ shall own and confess thee, before his Father and the holy Angels, and shall say, Come thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord: And then shall be, in sight of Heaven and Earth, of Men and Angels, reprobend and condemn those rash and hard judgments of Men, that violate every Day that Law of Equity, Judge, that ye be not judged. Seek therefore, O my Soul, oh seek to be approv'd of God; walk before him, and be perfect, be not a slave to Custom: Be not conformable to the evil Customs of this evil World: Think continually on him, before whose Eyes thou walkest continually, and who must be the Rewarder of all thy Works, or the Avenger of all thy Sins; get far from the Society of the prophane, that thou beest not infected with their Contagion; and since thou canst not vanquish their ill Customs by thy good Examples, take heed their bad Examples vanquish not thy good Customs.

PRAYER.

## P R A Y E R.

Alas, my God, my Saviour and Redeemer, come to my assistance; the stream bears me away, the course of waters carries me: I swim, and try, but still go down, and am more and more engag'd in the floods of this world's corruption. I condemn all vain words and actions, and all bad customs, that are far from modesty, simplicity, sobriety, and from christian purity: But yet I let my self go on. Take me, O Lord my God, my guardian and conducting Angel, and lead me by thy good Spirit in this sharp rough and difficult passage. The world is a dangerous sea, always beaten with storms and tempests, and never calm; 'tis full of banks and rocks, famous for a prodigious multitude of wrecks. Lord Jesus Christ, be thou my pilot: Blessed Spirit, be thou my north-star, in this most perillous voyage; that I may get out of these depths that open their gaping mouths to take me in. Enlighten me in this dark night, that I wander not; but leaving apart all those by-roads, though never so trodden and frequented by the worldlings, I may march on in the King's high-way, though it be never so deserted and unused. Let me go on in the ways of piety, of righteousness and devotion, which thou hast marked out; and  
that



that in these safe ways, I may advance continually, and leave the world and sin behind me: Let me tend to the mark, to the prize, to the possession of heaven, to which thou hast called me. O, my God, grant that I may arrive at last to that most blessed place, that port, where I shall be safe covered from all tempests; to that heaven, where I shall see thy face in righteousness; where I shall be satisfied with thy likeness; where I shall see thee without end, possess thee without weariness, and shall be blessed to all eternity. AMEN.

F I N I S.

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